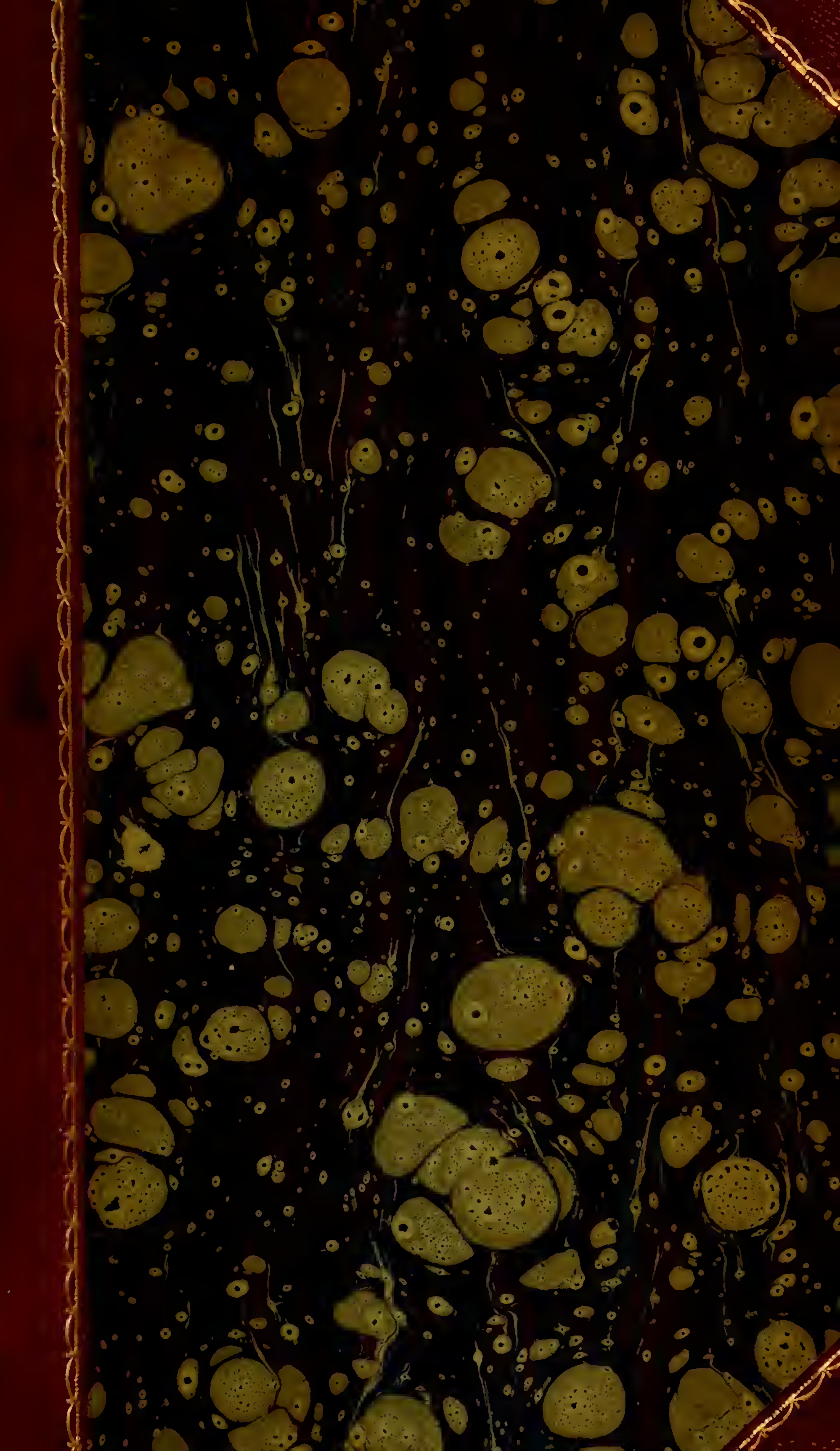
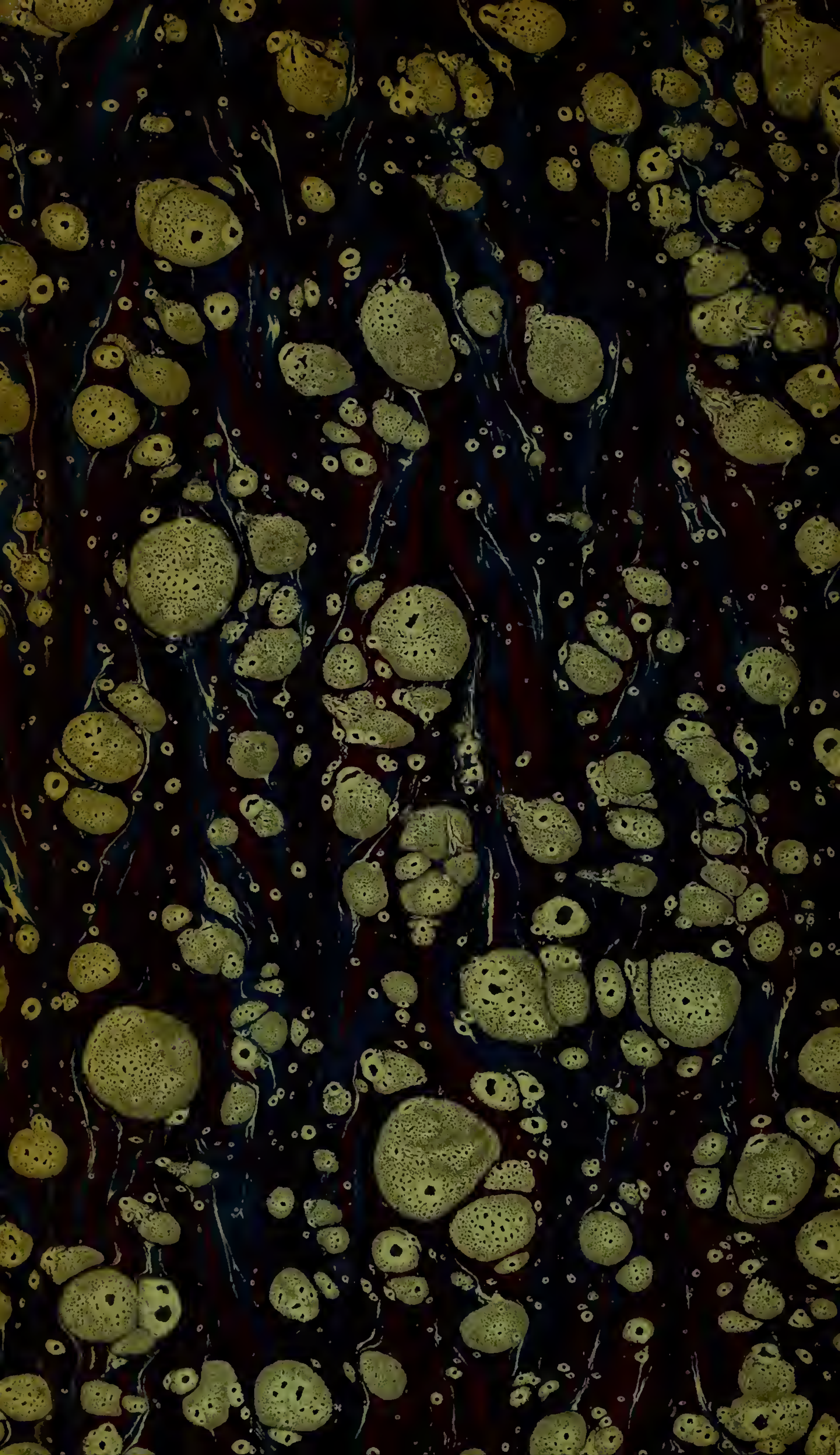
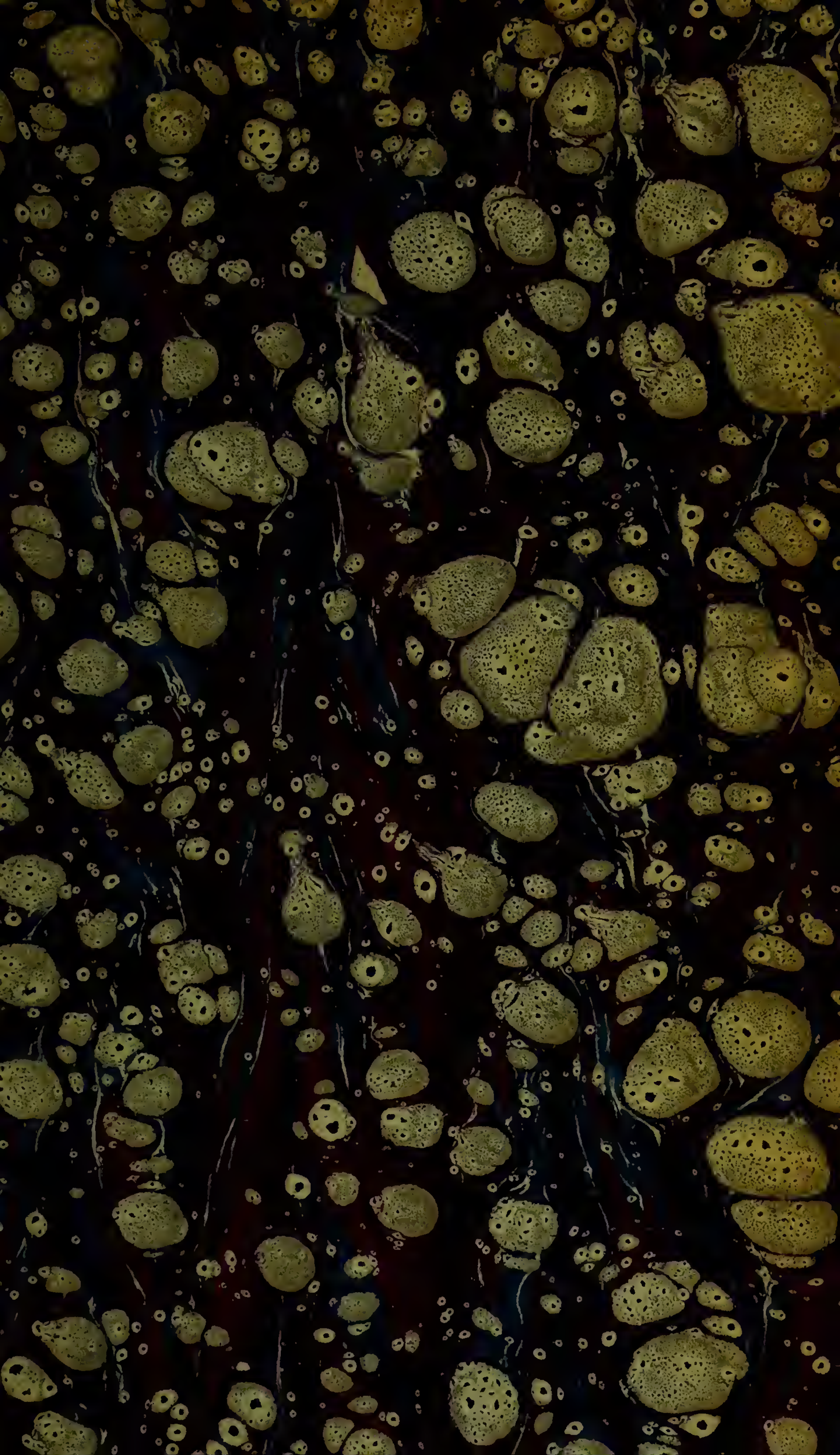






REPORT

OF

Dr. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,

AND OTHER

COMMISSIONERS,

CHARGED BY THE

KING OF FRANCE,

WITH THE EXAMINATION OF THE

ANIMAL MAGNETISM,

AS NOW PRACTISED AT PARIS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

WITH AN

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

LONDON:

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INTRODUCTION.

THE ſubject of the following pamphlet has excited the extremeſt attention in France, has for years filled their Journals and Mercures, and has employed ſome of their beſt pens and their brighteſt wits. By ſome it has been applauded as the greateſt of philoſophical diſcoveries, and by others decried as the juggle of an unprincipled impoſtor. The Engliſh nation has too much curioſity for every thing that occupies the neighbour kingdom, from whom we have long ſince been uſed to receive the laws of politeneſs and etiquette, and who have lately ſeemed to take the lead of us in philoſophical diſcovery, for the preſent tranſlation not to prove an acceptable preſent to a large and reſpec-

table claſs of our countrymen. It has been thought proper, in order that the moſt uninformed reader may find in this little compilation, every ſpecies of information upon the ſubject, to prefix to it a brief account of the progreſs of this ſyſtem.

M. Meſmer, the inventor of the animal magnetiſm, is a German phyſician. The firſt thing by which he diſtinguiſhed himſelf, appears to have been the publication of a Diſſertation upon the Influence of the Stars on the Human Body, printed at Vienna 1766, and publicly defended by him as a theſis in that univerſity. In 1774 father Hehl, a German philoſopher, ſtrongly recommended the uſe of the loadſtone in the art of medicine. M. Meſmer became very early a convert to the principles of this writer, and actually carried them into practice with diſtinguiſhed ſucceſs. In the midſt however of his attention to the utility of the loadſtone,

ſtone, he was led to the adoption of a new ſet of principles, which he conceived to be much more general in their application and importance. In conformity to theſe principles he laid aſide the uſe of the loadſtone, and proceeded with his cures in the method which he afterwards publiſhed to the world. This apoſtacy involved him in a quarrel with father Hehl and the celebrated Ingenhouz, by whom he had formerly been patronized; and as their credit in Vienna was extremely high, and their exertions againſt him indefatigable, his ſyſtem almoſt immediately ſunk into general diſrepute. To parry their oppoſition he appealed in 1776 to the academy of ſciences at Berlin. Here however his principles were rejected as "deſtitute of foundation and unworthy the ſmalleſt attention." Undiſmayed by theſe important miſcarriages, he made a progreſs through ſeveral towns of Germany, ſtill practiſing the methods

of the animal magnetiſm, and from time to time publiſhing an account of the cures he effected, which did not fail to be followed by a detection from his enemies. In the mean time, reſolved, as it ſhould ſeem, if poſſible not to deprive his country of the benefits of ſo valuable a diſcovery, he returned a ſecond time to Vienna, and made another eſſay with no greater ſucceſs than the former.

Decided in his conduct by theſe uninterrupted defeats, he left Germany and arrived at Paris in the beginning of the year 1778. Here one of the firſt connexions he formed was with M. A. J. S. D., author of the Dictionnaire des Merveilles de la Nature, from which work many of the following particulars are extracted. It is obſerved by this writer, that " in ſpite of the apparent cautiouſneſs and reſerve of M. Meſmer, and even in ſpite of the little ſucceſs of his firſt experiments, he could not refuſe him credit

credit for ſincerity in his conduct, and ſolidity in his reaſonings; and he was convinced, that the failure did not originate in the fault of his agent, but the indiſpoſition of the ſubjects upon which it was employed." In April 1778, M. Meſmer retired to Creteil with the patients he had collected, and in a few months almoſt all of them returned to Paris perfectly reſtored. One of them in particular was a paralytic, deprived of the uſe of her limbs, and who now walked with all the eaſe and firmneſs in the world. In November M. A. J. S. D. introduced M. Meſmer to the houſe of a family of diſtinction, and who were actuated with the extremeſt curioſity reſpecting all diſcoveries which had the benefit of humanity for their object. Here he made an experiment ſo remarkable that it is neceſſary to extract it ſomewhat at length.

 "There

" There being a pretty numerous company in the ſaloon, M. Meſmer touched ſucceſſively ſeveral perſons, ſome of whom had nerves extremely irritable, without producing any effect ſufficiently conſiderable to deſerve to be aſcribed to the animal magnetiſm. The operation was repeated; the ſucceſs was the ſame.

" The governor of the children of the family, a man of a very robuſt and muſcular conſtitution, little inclined to credulity, and fortified in his ſcepticiſm by what he had juſt ſeen, had complained for ſome time of a pain in his ſhoulders. As he was beyond diſpute the leaſt ſuſceptible perſon in the company, he propoſed himſelf by way of gaſconade for the ſubject of a laſt experiment.

" M. Meſmer refuſed to touch this gentleman, but conſented to direct upon him the magnetiſm from a ſmall diſtance. In compliance with the doctor's inclinations, the governor

turned

turned his back, and M. Meſmer, ſeven or eight feet from his ſubject, preſented his finger. This continued for two minutes, the governor replying to the repeated queſtions of the doctor with much humour and irony. M. Meſmer then nodded his head ſignificantly to the company, and in the mean time guided his finger upwards, downwards, and a little circularly. The patient ſaid that he felt a kind of ſhuddering in the ſuperior part of the back; he however aſcribed it to the action of the fire near which he ſtood, and accordingly removed to another part of the room. The experiment was reſumed, the ſenſation augmented, and the patient ſaid he could compare it to nothing better, than a ſtream of boiling water, circulating in the veins of his back and ſhoulders. The impreſſion became ſo ſtrong that he refuſed to ſubmit to the experiment any longer. He was perſuaded however; the maſter of the houſe

houſe held one of his arms, and myſelf the other. In the proceſs of the experiment the heat became ſo inſupportable, that he violently broke away from our graſp. It was ſucceeded by a profuſe perſpiration in the part affected.

"M. Meſmer then placed the forefinger of each hand upon the cheſt of the patient. The ſame ſenſation, but leſs violent, was produced in this part; it aſcended gradually to the face, and was ſucceeded by a perſpiration of the forehead. The patient then preſented his forefingers and thumbs, the reſt of his hand being clenched; M. Meſmer did the ſame very near to the patient, but without touching him. He complained ſucceſſively of a ſhuddering, itching and ſtiffneſs in the palms of his hands; theſe were again ſucceeded by a local perſpiration."

To this remarkable experiment we will beg leave to add the following from

from the Journal de Paris, No. 44, 1784.

"M. Meſmer being one day with meſſieurs Camp —— and d'E —— near the great canal at Meudon, propoſed to them to go alternately to the other ſide of the canal, while he remained where he was. He then directed them to thruſt their cane into the water, in the mean time doing the ſame himſelf. At this diſtance M. Camp —— was ſeized with a fit of the aſthma, and M. d'E —— with a pain in the liver to which he was ſubject. Many perſons have been unable to ſubmit to this experiment without fainting away."

"One evening M. Meſmer walked with ſix perſons in the gardens of the prince de Soubiſe. He performed the magnetical operation upon a tree, and a little time after three ladies of the company fainted away. The ducheſs de C——, the only remaining lady, ſupported herſelf upon the tree, with-

out

out being able to quit it. The count de Monſ ——, unable to ſtand, was obliged to throw himſelf upon a bench. The effects upon M. Ang——, a gentleman of a very muſcular frame, were more terrible. M. Meſmer's ſervant, who was ſummoned to remove the bodies, and who was inured to theſe ſcenes, found himſelf unable to move. The whole company were obliged to remain in this ſituation for a conſiderable time." Theſe inſtances are cited by M. Thouret, Recherches & Doutes, p. 65.

M. Meſmer was from the firſt deſirous of ſubmitting his ſyſtem to the examination of the faculty of medicine; but he would not ſubmit to a regular and authentic committee appointed for that purpoſe, apprehenſive as he ſaid of the baleful effects of the ſpirit of ſociety. This exception occaſioned a miſunderſtanding between him and the faculty, and the examination was never made.

In

In France the ſucceſs of M. Meſmer was the reverſe of what it had been in Germany. His patients increaſed rapidly. His cures were numerous and of the moſt aſtoniſhing nature. He was obliged to form a number of pupils under his inſpection to adminiſter his proceſs. In 1779 he publiſhed a Memoir reſpecting the Diſcovery of the Animal Magnetiſm, and promiſed a complete ſyſtem upon the ſubject, which ſhould make as great a revolution in philoſophy, as it had already done in medicine. Struck with the clearneſs and accuracy of his reaſonings, the magnificence of his pretenſions, and the extraordinary and unqueſtionable cures he performed, ſome of the greateſt phyſicians and moſt enlightened philoſophers of France became his converts. Among theſe M. Court de Gebelin particularly diſtinguiſhed himſelf, a writer, who had attained the higheſt reputation by his reſearches into antiquity,

tiquity, and who was, if poſſible, ſtill more diſtinguiſhed for the elegance of his taſte, the beauty of his conceptions and the richneſs of his fancy. The houſe of M. Meſmer at Creteil was crowded with patients. A numerous company was daily aſſembled at his houſe at Paris, where the operation was publicly performed; and M. Deſlon, one of his pupils, is ſaid to have cleared £100,000. He was patroniſed by people of the firſt rank, and, as M. Thouret obſerves, the animal magnetiſm became a mode, an affair of bon ton, an intereſt, extremely precious and warmly eſpouſed by the faſhionable world.

In the mean time the new ſyſtem was by no means deſtitute of enemies. Some of the firſt pens in France were drawn to oppoſe it, and among others that of M. Thouret, regent-phyſician of the faculty. The faculty indeed had all along beheld its progreſs with

the extremeſt jealouſy. At length it was thought to deſerve the attention of government, and a committee, partly phyſicians, and partly members of the royal academy of ſciences, with doctor Benjamin Franklin at their head, were appointed to examine it. M. Meſmer refuſed to have any communication with theſe gentlemen; but M. Deſlon, the moſt conſiderable of his pupils, conſented to diſcloſe to them his principles, and aſſiſt them in their enquiries. Their Report forms the principal piece in the enſuing pamphlet. M. Meſmer however has appealed from their deciſion to the parliament of Paris.

In the mean time it can no longer be concealed that the ſyſtem of the animal magnetiſm is to be regarded as an impoſture, and it may therefore be aſked, why it ſhould be thought neceſſary to give to the public a tranſlation of papers, which may be thought intereſting only to perſons

who

who have been witneſſes of the impoſture. To this enquiry ſeveral good anſwers may be given.

One at which we have already hinted is the univerſal attention it has excited at Paris, where it ſeems to have divided the public ſpeculations with the celebrated and incomparable diſcovery of the aeroſtatic globe. There are ſurely few people of a literary turn among us, who will confeſs themſelves void of curioſity reſpecting what engages all the faculties of our neighbours, or who will not confeſs that their literary purſuits are commonly at leaſt as intereſting and inſtructive a ſubject of enquiry, as their politics.

Secondly, the Report of the commiſſioners and the enquiries reſpecting the animal magnetiſm in general may be conſidered as relating not merely to a temporary and unfounded hypotheſis, but to the general and moſt important queſtion reſpecting the

the influence of the imagination upon the animal frame, a queſtion peculiarly intereſting to the metaphyſician, and of the laſt conſequence in medicine. Upon this ſubject the Report ſeems to throw new light, and to have a tendency to add preciſion and accuracy to our notions in regard to it.

But the argument upon which we would place the principal ſtreſs is the eſſential importance of this fact in the hiſtory of the human mind. Perhaps the hiſtory of the errors of mankind, all things conſidered, is more valuable and intereſting than that of their diſcoveries. Truth is uniform and narrow; it conſtantly exiſts, and does not ſeem to require ſo much an active energy, as a paſſive aptitude of ſoul in order to encounter it. But error is endleſsly diverſified; it has no reality, but is the pure and ſimple creation of the mind that invents it. In this field the ſoul has

room enough to expand herſelf, to diſplay all her boundleſs faculties, and all her beautiful and intereſting extravagancies and abſurdities. It is obſerved of civil hiſtory, that it is properly the record of human calamities; the ſame thing may be obſerved of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, it is the record of our errors. For this reaſon a well written eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, a ſpecies of compoſition that we ſuſpect does not yet exiſt, would perhaps be the moſt inſtructive ſtudy in the world.

But there is an additional reaſon, which gives the error of the animal magnetiſm a particular claim to our attention. The ſame error was ſtarted, if M. Thouret be in the right, two centuries ago. It is therefore worth our curioſity to enquire, what different inſtruments were neceſſary to deceive mankind in an ignorant and an enlightened age, in the commencement of the ſeventeenth and the cloſe of

of the eighteenth century; in a word to run a parallel between the borrowed ſyſtem of Meſmer, and the original one of Paracelſus, Maxwel and ſir Kenelm Digby. And as every publication ought to be as complete as poſſible within itſelf, we have deſtined to aſſiſt the reader in this enquiry, the enſuing paper of the ſociety of medicine reſpecting M. Thouret's performance.

P. S. The following extract of a letter from the beſt authority from Paris, has been received while theſe papers are in the preſs. It relates to the particulars of a fact alluded to at the bottom of page xiv.

" Meſmer has complained to the parliament of the report of the royal commiſſioners, and requeſted that they would appoint a new commiſſion, to examine — not his theory and practice, but—a *plan*, which ſhall ex-

exhibit the only poſſible means of infallibly demonſtrating the exiſtence and utility of his diſcovery. The petition was printed: many thought the parliament would do nothing in it. But they have laid hold of it to clinch Meſmer, and oblige him to expoſe all directly; ſo that it muſt ſoon be ſeen whether there is any difference between his method and Deſlon's.—I give you their

"Arret, of the 6 Sept. 1784.

"The parliament ordains that Meſmer *ſhall be obliged* to expoſe, before four doctors of the faculty of medicine, two ſurgeons and two maſters in pharmacy, the doctrine, which he profeſſes to have diſcovered, and the methods which he pretends muſt be adopted for the application of his principles: they likewiſe ordain that a report of his communications ſhall then be delivered to the attorney general, to be laid before parliament for their ſentence."

REPORT

R E P O R T

Of a Committee of the Royal Society of Medicine, appointed to examine a Work, entitled, ENQUIRIES AND DOUBTS RESPECTING THE ANIMAL MAGNETISM, BY M. THOURET, *Regent Physician of the Faculty of Paris, and Member of the Society.* To which are subjoined, by the Tranflator, Notes, chiefly extracted from M. Thouret's Performance.

THE underwritten were charged by the royal fociety of medicine, with the examination of a work of M. Thouret, member of the fociety, entitled, Enquiries and Doubts refpecting the Animal Magnetifm.

In the attentive perufal of this work, it is obvious to remark, that it has two very diftinct objects; one of them, which is in a manner hiftorical, is to explain the coincidences of the animal magnetifm, as it was known to the ancients, with that which is admitted by the moderns: the other contains critical reflections and doubts in regard to the evidences upon which the doctrine is founded, the uncertainty of

 which

which M. Thouret undertakes to diſplay. We will endeavour to lay before the ſociety an idea of his performance.

The animal magnetiſm held a principal rank among the ſyſtems, which were embraced in that period of literary hiſtory, when ſuppoſitions were admitted to hold the place of facts; and this hypotheſis vaniſhed, together with many others, when experimental philoſophy began to diſſipate the impoſtures of the imagination, and to afford an accurate meaſure of the value of arts and ſciences.

The object of this ſyſtem was a fluid extremely ſubtle, upon which were beſtowed the magnificent titles of ſoul of the world, ſpirit of the univerſe, and univerſal magnetic fluid; and which was pretended to be diffuſed through the whole ſpace occupied by the material creation, to animate the ſyſtem of nature, to penetrate all ſubſtances, and to be the vehicle to animated bodies in general, and their ſeveral regions in particular, of certain forces of attraction and repulſion, by means of which they explained the phenomena of nature.

Nor were they contented to admit, or rather to imagine, the fluid we have deſcribed; they flattered themſelves that they were able, in certain methods, to render themſelves maſters of this fluid, and to direct its operations. Even this did not

not terminate their chimerical pretenſions: they affirmed that this fluid, in which they admitted a ſpecies of flux and reflux, exerted an important degree of action upon the nerves, and had a grand analogy with the vital principle; that its effects, under the guidance of ſkill and illumination, extended to very great diſtances, without the intervention of any foreign ſubſtances; that it was poſſible to impregnate with it, either certain powders, in the manner of ſir Kenelm Digby, who aſſerted that he had done this, or fluids, or different parts of the bodies of animals; that this agent was like light reflected by mirrors, and that ſound and muſic augmented its intenſity.

The partiſans of the animal magnetiſm, who wrote in the ſeventeenth century, did not yet confine their hopes within theſe limits: the art of directing the fluid, which they had brought down from heaven, and which, according to them, acted in ſo diſtinguiſhed a manner upon the human body, might be expected to have a conſiderable ſhare in the medical ſcience, or rather to ſuperſede that ſcience, as it had hitherto exiſted; they did not fail to aſſert, that in cauſing it to circulate in a proper manner, the reſtoration of diſeaſed organs was infallible, as well the preſervation of

the health of thoſe who were yet unattacked with any diſeaſe (1).

Such was the origin of an external and univerſal medicine, of a ſpecies entirely new, and which boaſted of having the advantage of curing diſeaſes, without obliging any drugs to be ſwallowed by the diſeaſed. Soon after poles were diſcovered in the human

(1) " It muſt be confeſſed however, that the manner of directing the pretended magnetiſm, is different in theſe ſyſtems. The ancients, as well as M. Meſmer, regarded this fluid as univerſally diffuſed, as pervading the bodies of animals, and as capable of being rendered the vehicle of the moſt ſalutary influences. But, in order to call it into action, they did not, like M. Meſmer, deſire to touch, or ſo much as to approach the patient. Their method conſiſted in a different order of proceeding. To give a ſuitable direction to the univerſal ſpirit, they were obliged to employ real parts, either extracted or evacuated, of the individual upon whom they propoſed to direct the magnetiſm. The different humours of the human body, whether natural, as the blood, the urine, the excrements, or contrary to nature, as the pus bred in wounds; in fine, the ſolid parts of the frame, as the fleſh, the nails, the hair, in a ſtate of ſeparation from the body, afforded, according to the ancient doctrine, the ſuitable and neceſſary means of employing the magnetiſm. Theſe different parts, ſo long as they remained in a ſtate of integrity, were ſuppoſed to be united in the link of a common vital principle with the individual who had furniſhed them. The union was operated by the intervention of the univerſal ſpirit, and in acting upon them, the phyſician was ſaid to act alſo upon the perſon to whom they had belonged; an action, which, as it was independent of contact, and was not ſuperſeded by diſtance, was regarded as magnetic." *Thouret.*

human body, that is, points, towards which it appeared that the action of this imaginary fluid ought to be directed, cures and evacuations were operated without the assistance of pharmacy, sensations of various kinds were excited in the patients; and notwithstanding the distinguished effects ascribed to this agent, it was asserted, that persons the most feeble and delicate might submit to its process without danger. The process had yet another use, that of discovering the seat of the distemper; a thing frequently so difficult to be ascertained, but which was pointed out by the fluid by a sort of instinctive intelligence, and with absolute demonstration. It perfected the concoction of the humours; nervous distempers in particular, rarely resisted its influence; it was favourable to transpiration. In fine, and this last remark is of particular importance, it had a powerful action upon the moral principles of our frame. A propensity, that could scarcely be resisted, was the basis of the attachment and gratitude, which were vowed by the patients to those who had employed upon them this method of cure. Several, and in this number was Maxwel, even gave us to understand, that it was possible, in certain circumstances of human life, to make an

improper uſe of this vehicle of influence (2).

This picture of the animal magnetiſm, as it was invented and applauded by the ancients, is faithfully extracted from the performance of M. Thouret. The principal authors, to which he has recourſe in the progreſs of his enquiry, are Paracelſus, Van Helmont, Goclenius, Burgravius, Libavius, Wirdig, Maxwel, Santanelli, Tentzel, Kircher and Borel (3). The entire paſ-

(2) "Far be it from me," ſays Maxwel, "to lead you to improper actions. If from the peruſal of my works, you become acquainted with the means of ſuch actions, you will do me the juſtice not to divulge them. —I have ſeen," adds he, "the moſt incredible effects, and the greateſt advantages from a right uſe of this method. I have alſo ſeen infinite evils occaſioned by the abuſe of it.—Indeed, it is ſcarcely prudent to treat of theſe ſubjects, on account of the dangers that may reſult from it. If we were to expreſs ourſelves in a manner univerſally intelligible, fathers could never be ſure of their daughters, nor huſbands of their wives; women would be deprived of their ſelf-government in ſpite of the moſt judicious and obſtinate reſiſtance." *Maxwel, de medicina magnetica, apud Thouret.*

(3) Paracelſus Arecolus Philippus Theophraſtus Bombaſtus de Hohenheim is to be regarded as the inventor of the magnetical ſyſtem. He was born at a village near Zurich in Switzerland in 1493, and died in 1541. His profeſſion was that of a phyſician, and he obtained great reputation by the uſe of mercury and opium, medicines that were unknown, or not employed by the phyſicians of thoſe times. But beſide this, he was a proficient in alchymy, aſtrology, and magic. He was acquainted with the philoſopher's ſtone, and the uni-

paſſages are extracted, and M. Thouret has diſplayed in this performance, as he had already done in ſo many others, an erudition, the moſt various, the moſt preciſe, and the moſt extenſive.

univerſal medicine. And he invented an elixir, in the uſe of which a man could not fail to live to the age of a thouſand years.

Van Helmont was the immediate ſucceſſor of Paracelſus in the purſuit of the magnetical ſcience, and wrote an expreſs treatiſe De Magnetica Vulnerum Curatione.

All the other perſons enumerated, lived in the ſeventeenth century.

" To Maxwel, we are particularly indebted for the moſt complete and copious treatiſe upon the ſubject, in which he has endeavoured to ſupport its declining credit by calling in the aſſiſtance of that theory of the univerſal ſpirit, which he derived from the earlieſt philoſophers of antiquity, and in which we are preſented with the exact counterpart of the ſyſtem of M. Meſmer.

" Another inhabitant of this iſland, the learned and illuſtrious ſir Kenelm Digby, is well known for his invention of the ſympathetic powder; which it was only neceſſary to apply to the linnen which had imbibed the blood or pus of a wound, or to the arm or ſword of him who inflicted it, provided they were ſtill ſtained with the blood of the wounded perſon. It was neceſſary however, that the wound ſhould be kept perfectly clean, and protected from the air.

" There was a ſympathetic ſweating powder, invented ſo lately as the year 1745. The means of applying it was, by mixing it with the urine of the perſon diſeaſed, and keeping it boiling over a fire, as long as you wiſhed the perſpiration to continue. During the operation, the patient was to keep his bed, to be covered up warm, and to drink ſeveral large baſons of tea. This medicine was never known to fail of its effect." *Thouret.*

It is eaſy to ſee, how analogous is the ſyſtem we have deſcribed to that of M. Meſmer. To demonſtrate this analogy, M. Thouret has conſidered ſeparately each of the propoſitions publiſhed and avowed by the latter. They amount to twenty-ſeven, and the reſult of this examination is, that they are all poſitively announced in ſome of the authors whoſe names have been recited.

Every part of Meſmer's ſyſtem, even down to the experiments of the ring and the ſword, have been found by M. Thouret in the works of theſe writers (4). It is therefore certain, that the aſſertions of M. Meſmer, which are repreſented by him as principles of his own, do not belong to him; and that this theory, in the room of being an attractive novelty, is an ancient ſyſtem, abandoned by the learned near a century ago.

In aſcending indeed to the original ſyſtems which were formed upon the ſubject,

(4) The experiments of the ring and ſword, are to be found in Kircher's Magnes, ſive de arte magnetica. They are both well known. "That of the ſword conſiſts in the balancing it upon the point of one of the fingers, the conſequence of which will be a very rapid rotatory motion, *provided the perſon be properly magnetiſed.* That of the ring is performed by a perſon initiated in the animal magnetiſm, holding it ſuſpended by a thread in the inſide of a wine glaſs, when it will invariably ſtrike the hour of the day." *Thouret.*

we

we are unable to diſcover any thing but ſuppoſitions deſtitute of proof, and for that reaſon devoted to oblivion. The parts of this hypotheſis were not connected together by any other tie, than that of the imagination. The ſteps that were propoſed in order to its eſtabliſhment, were the very ſame that had been employed in favour of the art of cure, now by enchantments, and now by exorciſms. It has been always by ſenſations that they have pretended to prove the exiſtence of theſe different agents; and if this kind of proof were ſufficient, there is not one of them which would not have been demonſtrated. Sound philoſophy has therefore refuſed credit, as well to this ſpecies of proof, as to the magnetiſm, ſuch as it was propoſed by Maxwel, Goclenius and Santanelli, and ſuch as we have deſcribed it in the opening of this report.

Has the animal magnetiſm of M. Meſmer any better claim to our confidence? M. Thouret, without replying to this queſtion in a poſitive manner, has permitted to himſelf, in the ſecond part of his work, certain reflections reſpecting it, which he has propoſed ſimply as doubts, and which relate entirely to what M. Meſmer has publiſhed, or authentically advanced. It may be objected to him, ſays M. Thouret,

1. That

1. That the touch frequently employed in his method for a conſiderable time, and on regions extremely ſenſible, ſuch as thoſe of the ſtomach, is of itſelf capable of producing effects, by communicating a vivid impulſe to the nerves of the plexuſes which are there ſituated, and which have an intimate connection with the whole nervous ſyſtem; that authentic records preſent us with a great number of facts of this kind, and that in conſequence, the ſenſations, which originate in the application of the touch, do not prove the exiſtence of a ſeparate fluid or agent.

2. That the heat produced by the hand, and the motion communicated to the air, may occaſion very ſtrong impreſſions upon a perſon extremely ſenſible, and whoſe fibres are in a ſtate of convulſion, without theſe impreſſions being calculated to prove a new agent.

3. That in ſubduing the imagination by ſolemn preparations, by extraordinary proceedings, by the confidence and enthuſiaſm inſpired by magnificent promiſes, it is poſſible to exalt the tone of ſenſible and nervous fibres, and afterwards to direct, by the application of the hands, their impulſe towards certain organs, and to excite in them evacuations or excretions, without there reſulting any addition to the ſciences, either of philoſophy or medicine.

4. That

4. That the partisans of the animal magnetism do not produce what they call crises, that is, a state of convulsions, but in subjects extremely irritable, extremely nervous, and above all, in women, whose sensibility has been already excited by the means we have described.

5. That among these disposing causes, particular stress is to be laid upon the presence of a person already in a state of convulsion, or ready to fall into that state; that just as an organ attacked with spasmodic affections, easily propagates these affections to the other organs, in like manner are they transmitted from one man to another; that we have therefore no reason to be surprised, if in the halls, where the pretended magnetical operations are performed, spasms, and even convulsions are diffused with extreme alacrity; and that history furnishes a great number of facts, of convulsions propagated through whole villages or towns, in a manner still more astonishing than that of which the animal magnetism presents us with an example.

6. That history has also transmitted to us a great number of cures operated by fear, by joy, or the commotion of any violent passion; which proves beyond controversy, the power of nervous influences over diseases.

7. That in different ages, two famous empirics, Valentine Greatrakes of the kingdom of Ireland, and Gaſſner of Ratiſbon, produced upon different perſons effects which appeared ſurpriſing, and have had their admirers; that they employed only the inſtrumentality of the touch, either upon the nape of the neck, or the limb affected; and that it has been univerſally acknowledged, that they acted only upon the imagination (5).

8. That

(5) " Valentine Greatrakes, eſq; was a native of Afane, in the kingdom of Ireland. We are told, that one day he was conſcious to a wonderful internal revolution, and at the ſame time heard a voice like that of a genius, which cried inceſſantly for a long time: " I " endow you with the faculty of curing diſeaſes." Importuned by this ſalutation, from which he could in no way diſtract his attention, he determined to make an experiment of the truth of the intelligence. The voice had firſt announced to him the gift of curing the king's evil. He made an experiment upon this diſtemper, and ſucceeded. He afterwards touched perſons attacked with an epidemical fever, that raged in his neighbourhood; the voice had announced to him the gift of curing this diſeaſe. In fine, he was enabled to cure every ſpecies of diſeaſe; and he ſucceeded in all caſes, except where, as he obſerved, the malady was too deeply rooted, or the patient laboured under a particular indiſpoſition to this method of cure. The exterior of this man was extremely ſimple. His cures were accompanied with no degree of pomp and ceremony, unleſs we ſhould call ſuch, his aſcribing his ſucceſs to God, publicly expreſſing his gratitude, and inviting the patient to join with him in the act of thankſgiving. But he made a very extenſive uſe of the operation of touch. The diſtemper fled before

8. That in many inſtances, the partiſans of the magnetiſm ſeem to beſtow a greater attention

before him, and he was able, we are told, to diſlodge it from its ſeat, and remove it to parts the leaſt uſeful. If its progreſs appeared to be ſuſpended in any part, he redoubled his frictions upon that part, to remove the obſtacle. In this operation nature, excited by the ſtroking, ſeemed frequently to operate criſes, and it produced ſtools, vomitings and perſpirations." *Thouret.*

" Greatrakes cured not only internal diſeaſes, but alſo external ones, ſuch as wounds and ulcers. The ſecond Villiers, duke of Buckingham, was one of his patients. His atteſtations were ſigned by Boyle, Wilkins, Whichcot, Cudworth and Patrick. He was born in 1628, received the gift of healing 1662, and removed to London 1666." *Des Maizeaux, Vie de St. Evremond.*

" The cures of Gaſſner are of a much later date, and are not above ten or twelve years old. This German, having in his youth been afflicted with an ill ſtate of health, which reſiſted the efforts of all the phyſicians, ſuſpected that his diſtemper might have a ſupernatural cauſe, and derive from the influence of the devil. His conjecture was verified by his ſucceſs in expelling the devil, having adjured him in the name of Jeſus Chriſt. From that moment he enjoyed the moſt perfect health for ſixteen years. Encouraged by this event, he laid aſide the ſtudy of medicine, to which his diſtemper had prompted him, and procured all the authors who had treated of exorciſm. He began with healing his pariſhioners in an obſcure town upon the borders of Switzerland and the Tirol, and his reputation increaſed ſo much, that, in the two laſt years of his reſidence there, he had between four and five hundred patients who applied to him. He then made a progreſs through ſeveral of the Swiſs cantons, and ſettled at Ratiſbon in 1774. He diſtinguiſhed diſeaſes into two claſſes, the natural and the demoniac, the laſt of which were much the moſt numerous. Over the former he pretended to no power.

attention to excite ſurpriſe in the ſpectators, than ſalutary effects in their pa-

power. His cures were performed with much pomp and ſolemnity; and it was obſerved, that he conſtantly rubbed his hands upon his girdle and handkerchief previouſly to his touching the patient. He performed his cures in the name of Chriſt, and by the faith of the diſeaſed in his holy name; if their faith failed, the cure did not take place. He gave the ſick, when he diſmiſſed them, balm and oil, which he conſidered as ſpiritual medicaments, together with certain waters and powders, and a little ring, inſcribed with the name of Jeſus, to prevent a relapſe." *Thouret.*

Thouret conſiders the ſyſtem of Gaſſner as having had an influence on that of M. Meſmer. Aſtrology and poſſeſſions were extremely current in Germany; and as Gaſſner had taken poſſeſſion of, and ruined the latter pretenſion, Meſmer had recourſe to the former. It ſhould however be remembered, that Meſmer had written and publiſhed his theſis upon aſtrology before the pretenſions of Gaſſner were heard of.

Theſe inſtances are produced by Thouret, as diſtinguiſhed proofs of the efficacy both of the touch and the imagination. In proof of the contagion of convulſive affections, he cites the convulſions of Saint Medard, and the poſſeſſions of Loudun. "The former of theſe took place in 1732, and made their appearance as ſoon as any of the religious were approached to the tomb of their patron ſaint. They were expoſed in the moſt triumphant manner, and covered with ridicule by Hecquet, in his Natural Hiſtory of Convulſions. The pretended poſſeſſions of Loudun (1740) originated in an infamous ſcheme of avarice and revenge againſt the unfortunate Urbain Grandier, rector of Loudun, who became the victim of the machinations of his enemies. The phyſicians of Montpelier, charged with the examination of the affair, diſcovered the whole ſecret of the poſſeſſions to conſiſt in factitious and pretended convulſions." *Thouret.*

tients;

tients; the ſpaſms and convulſions which they produce being the ſource of undoubted evil, were it only by the habitude of that ſtate which they are calculated to induce, while the advantages of this method are not equally demonſtrated.

9. That certain local diſeaſes not being of the number of thoſe upon which the animal magnetiſm acts, and certain perſons, by the confeſſion of M. Meſmer, not being ſuſceptible of its action, it may be ſuſpected, that the partiſans of this ſyſtem have contrived for themſelves this reſource, in order to account for their failure of ſucceſs in certain caſes.

10. That to pretend to the diſcovery of a means which ſhall extend to every kind of diſeaſe, that is, to an univerſal medicine, is an illuſion which cannot be excuſed in an enlightened age.

11. That the known effects of ſenſibility are ſufficient to explain, without any new agent, the phenomena which M. Meſmer produces by a method which he has not yet imparted to the public.

12. That M. Meſmer, in ſuppoſing a particular agent, has adopted a rout contrary to the intereſts of his diſcovery, in following the example of thoſe who have exerted their efforts to give credit to a ſyſtem, worthy upon every account of the oblivion into which it has fallen.

The

The ſociety may judge of the performance from this extract: it is proper here to call to mind, that the royal ſociety, acquainted with the zeal of M. Thouret, and his indefatigable enquiries into every thing that concerned the magnetiſm, charged him in their ſeſſion of the twelfth of March 1784, with the collection from the authors, as well ancient as modern, of all that had been written reſpecting the animal magnetiſm. This collection, which is ſufficiently complete to ſatisfy every reaſonable deſire, and of which M. Thouret communicated the plan to the ſociety, compoſes the firſt part of his work, and is to be conſidered as his report to the ſociety upon that ſubject. We are of opinion, that the ſociety is extremely indebted to him in that reſpect. The ſecond part contains judicious reflections and ſagacious doubts. We think both of them worthy of being printed with the approbation and privilege of the ſociety.

The ſociety, charged by the king with the examination of all new inventions and ſecret methods of healing diſeaſes, has not beheld without inquietude, the ſpecies of vogue acquired by the animal magnetiſm; whoſe procedures, whatever be their merit, have been and are adminiſtred to the diſeaſed, and paid for by the public, without

without having previoufly, in obedience to the exprefs provifions of the laws of the kingdom, undergone the examination of the phyfical profeffion; an abufe, againft which the fociety, as in duty bound, has exclaimed ever fince its introduction. They have a right to take much pride to themfelves, that one of their members is publifhing fo learned enquiries upon a fubject, which has not been hitherto treated but in anonymous compofitions, which are, for the greater part, deftined more for the amufement than the inftruction of their readers. The work of M. Thouret, full of depth and fagacity, will enlighten thofe who are impartial in their enquiries, and will greatly tend to the folution of a queftion, upon which the public intereft requires that fentence fhould be pronounced as foon as poffible.

Louvre, July the 9th, 1784.

(Signed) GEOFFROY,
DESPERRIERES,
JEANROI,
DEFOURCROY,
CHAMBON,
VICQ D'AZYR.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS, &c.

THE king named, on the twelfth of March 1784, four phyſicians of the faculty of Paris, meſſieurs Borie, Sallin, d'Arcet, Guillotin, to enter into the examination, and to lay before him an account of the animal magnetiſm practiſed by M. Deſlon: and upon the petition of theſe phyſicians, his majeſty joined with them, for the purpoſe of this inquiſition, five members of the royal academy of ſciences, meſſieurs Franklin, le Roy, Bailly, de Borie, Lavoiſier. M. Borie having died in the commencement of the buſineſs, his majeſty appointed M. Majault, doctor of the faculty, to replace him.

M. Meſmer has deſcribed the agent he profeſſes to have diſcovered, and to which he has given the appellation of animal magnetiſm, in the following manner. "It

" is a fluid univerſally diffuſed; the vehi-
" cle of a mutual influence between the
" celeſtial bodies, the earth and the
" bodies of animated beings; it is ſo
" continued as to admit of no vacuum;
" its ſubtlety does not admit of illuſtra-
" tion; it is capable of receiving, propa-
" gating and communicating all the im-
" preſſions that are incident to motion;
" it is ſuſceptible of flux and reflux. The
" animal body is ſubject to the effects of
" this agent; and theſe effects are im-
" mediately produced by the agent inſinu-
" ating itſelf into the ſubſtance of the
" nerves. We particularly diſcover in the
" human body qualities analogous to thoſe
" of the loadſtone; we diſtinguiſh in it
" poles different and oppoſite. The action
" and the virtue of the animal magnetiſm
" are capable of being communicated from
" one body to another, animated or in-
" animate; they exert themſelves to con-
" ſiderable diſtances, and without the leaſt
" aſſiſtance from any intermediate bodies:
" this action is increaſed and reflected by
" mirrors; it is communicated, propa-
" gated and augmented by ſound; and the
" virtue itſelf is capable of being accu-
" mulated, concentrated and transferred.
" Though the fluid be univerſal, all ani-
" mal bodies are not equally ſuſceptible

" of

" of it; there even are ſome, though very
" few, of ſo oppoſite a nature, as by their
" mere preſence to ſuperſede its effects
" upon any other contiguous bodies.

" The animal magnetiſm is capable of
" curing immediately diſeaſes of the nerves,
" and mediately other diſtempers; it im-
" proves the action of medicines; it
" forwards and directs the ſalutary criſes
" ſo as to ſubject them totally to the
" government of the judgment; by means
" of it the phyſician becomes acquainted
" with the ſtate of health of each indi-
" vidual, and decides with certainty upon
" the cauſes, the nature and the progreſs
" of the moſt complicated diſtempers;
" it prevents their increaſe, and effects
" their extirpation, without at any time
" expoſing the patient, whatever be his
" age, ſex or conſtitution, to alarming in-
" cidents, or unpleaſing conſequences*."
" In the influence of the magnetiſm, nature
" holds out to us a ſovereign inſtrument
" for ſecuring the health and lengthening
" the exiſtence of mankind†."

Such is the agent, with the examination of which the commiſſioners have been charged,

* Memoir by M. Meſmer, upon the Diſcovery of the Animal Magnetiſm, 1779, pages 74 and following.

† Ibid. Advertiſement, page vi.

charged, and whoſe properties are avowed by M. Deſlon, who admits all the principles of M. Meſmer. This theory forms the baſis of a memoir, which was read at the houſe of M. Deſlon, on the ninth day of May, in the preſence of M. the lieutenant general of the police, and the commiſſioners. It is aſſerted in this memoir, that there is but one nature, one diſtemper and one remedy; and this remedy is the animal magnetiſm. This phyſician, at the ſame time that he acquainted the commiſſioners with the doctrine and proceſs of the magnetiſm, inſtructed them in its practice by diſcovering to them the poles, and ſhewing them the manner of touching the diſeaſed, and directing in regard to them the magnetic fluid.

M. Deſlon undertook to the commiſſioners, in the firſt place, to evince the exiſtence of the animal magnetiſm; ſecondly, to communicate to them his knowledge reſpecting this diſcovery; and thirdly, to prove the utility of this diſcovery and of the animal magnetiſm in the cure of diſeaſes.

After having thus made themſelves acquainted with the theory and practice of the animal magnetiſm, it was neceſſary to obſerve its effects. For this purpoſe the commiſſioners adjourned themſelves, and each of them repeatedly witneſſed the public

public method of M. Deſlon. They ſaw in the centre of a large apartment a circular box, made of oak, and about a foot or a foot and an half deep, which is called the bucket;* the lid of this box is pierced with a number of holes, in which are inſerted branches of iron, elbowed and moveable. The patients are arranged in ranks about this bucket, and each has his branch of iron, which by means of the elbow may be applied immediately to the part affected; a cord paſſed round their bodies connects them one with the other: ſometimes a ſecond means of communication is introduced, by the inſertion of the thumb of each patient between the fore-finger and thumb of the patient next him; the thumb thus inſerted is preſſed by the perſon holding it; the impreſſion received by the left hand of the patient, communicates through his right, and thus paſſes through the whole circle.

A piano forté is placed in one corner of the apartment, and different airs are played with various degrees of rapidity; vocal muſic is ſometimes added to the inſtrumental.

The perſons who ſuperintend the proceſs, have each of them an iron rod in his hand, from ten to twelve inches in length.

* *Baquet.* The diameter of this box is uſually large enough to admit of fifty perſons ſtanding round its circumference. *Tranſlator.*

M. Deſlon made to the commiſſioners the following declarations. 1ſt. That this rod is a conductor of the magnetiſm, has the power of concentring it at its point, and of rendering its emanations more conſiderable. 2dly. That ſound, conformably to the theory of M. Meſmer, is alſo a conductor of the magnetiſm, and that to communicate the fluid to the piano forté, nothing more is neceſſary than to approach to it the iron rod; that the perſon who plays upon the inſtrument furniſhes alſo a portion of the fluid, and that the magnetiſm is tranſmitted by the ſounds to the ſurrounding patients. 3dly. That the cord which is paſſed round the bodies of the patients is deſtined, as well as the union of their fingers, to augment the effects by communication. 4thly. That the interior part of the bucket is ſo conſtructed as to concentre the magnetiſm, and is a grand reſervoir, from which the fluid is diffuſed through the branches of iron that are inſerted in its lid.

The commiſſioners in the progreſs of their examination diſcovered, by means of an electrometer and a needle of iron not touched with the loadſtone, that the bucket contained no ſubſtance either electric or magnetical; and from the detail that M. Deſlon has made to them reſpecting the interior conſtruction of the

bucket, they cannot infer any phyſical agent, capable of contributing to the imputed effects of the magnetiſm.

The patients then, arranged in conſiderable number and in ſucceſſive ranks round the bucket, derive the magnetic virtue at once from all theſe conveyances: from the branches of iron, which tranſmit to them that of the bucket; from the cord which is paſſed round their bodies, and the union of their fingers, which communicate to them that of their neighbours; and from the ſound of the piano forté, or of a muſical voice, which diffuſes it through the air. The patients are beſide magnetiſed directly, by means of a finger or a bar of iron, guided before the face, above or behind the head, and over the ſurface of the parts affected, the diſtinction of the poles ſtill obſerved; they are alſo acted upon by a look, and by having their attention excited. But eſpecially they are magnetiſed by the application of the hands, and by the preſſure of the fingers upon the hypochonders and the regions of the lower belly; an application frequently continued for a long time, ſometimes for ſeveral hours.

In this ſituation the patients offer a ſpectacle extremely varied in proportion to their different habits of body. Some of them are calm, tranquil and unconſcious

conſcious to any ſenſation ; others cough, ſpit, are affected with a ſlight degree of pain, a partial or an univerſal burning, and perſpirations ; a third claſs are agitated and tormented with convulſions. Theſe convulſions are rendered extraordinary by their frequency, their violence and their duration. As ſoon as one perſon is convulſed, others preſently are affected by that ſymptom. The commiſſioners ſaw acceſſes of this kind, which laſted upwards of three hours ; they were accompanied with expectorations of a thick and viſcous water, brought away by the violence of the efforts. Sometimes theſe expectorations were accompanied with ſmall quantities of blood ; and there is among others a lad, a patient, who has frequently brought up blood in conſiderable abundance. Theſe convulſions are characteriſed by precipitate and involuntary motions of all the limbs or of the whole body, by a contraction of the throat, by ſudden affections of the hypochonders and the epigaſtrium, by a diſtraction and wildneſs in the eyes, by ſhrieks, tears, hiccuppings, and immoderate laughter. They are either preceded or followed by a ſtate of languor and reverie, by a ſpecies of dejection and even drowſineſs. The leaſt unforeſeen noiſe occaſions ſtarting ; and it has been obſerved, that the changing of the

the key and the time, in the airs played upon the piano forté, had an effect upon the patients; so that a quicker motion agitates them more, and renews the vivacity of their convulsions.

There is an apartment lined with quilting, which was originally destined for the patients in whom the magnetism produced convulsions, and is denominated the apartment of crises; but M. Deslon has not judged proper to make any use of it; and all the patients, whatever be the accidents of their situation, are placed together in the apartment of public proceeding.

Nothing can be more astonishing than the sight of these convulsions; he that has not had it, can have no idea of it: and in beholding it, a man is not less struck with the profound repose of one class of patients, than with the violence which agitates another; he observes with admiration the various accidents that are repeated, and the sympathies that are developed. He sees some patients seek each other with eagerness; and in approaching smile, converse with all the demonstrations of attachment, and soothe their mutual crises. They are entirely under the government of the person who distributes the magnetic virtue: in vain they may appear to be in a state of the extremest drowsiness, his voice, a look, a sign from him rouses them.

It

It is impoſſible not to recogniſe in theſe regular effects an extraordinary influence, acting upon the patients, making itſelf maſter of them, and of which he who ſuperintends the proceſs, appears to be the depoſitory.

Theſe convulſive affections are improperly ſtiled criſes in the theory of the animal magnetiſm: according to this doctrine indeed they are regarded as a ſalutary criſis, of the ſame kind as thoſe which nature produces, or which a ſkilful phyſician has the art to excite to facilitate the cure of diſeaſes. The commiſſioners will adopt this expreſſion in the following report; and, wherever they employ the word criſis, they will always underſtand the convulſive, drowſy or lethargic affections, produced by the means of the animal magnetiſm.

The commiſſioners obſerved, that in the number of patients in the ſtate of criſis, there were always many women and few men: that it was one or two hours before theſe criſes took place; and that, when one had taken place, all the others commenced ſucceſſively, and without any conſiderable interval. But after having made theſe general remarks, the commiſſioners were ſpeedily of opinion, that the public proceſs could not be made the ſcene of their experiments. The multiplicity of the

the effects is one obſtacle; too many things are ſeen at once for any one of them to be ſeen well. Beſide, the patients of rank, who repair hither upon account of their health, might be diſpleaſed with the enquiries of the commiſſioners; the very act of watching them might appear a nuiſance; and the recollection of this might be burdenſome, and impede the commiſſioners in their turn. They therefore reſolved, that as their frequent attendance at the public proceſs was unneceſſary, it would be ſufficient for a few of them to go from time to time, to confirm the former general obſervations, to make new ones in caſe an opportunity ſhould occur for that purpoſe, and to report them to the commiſſion aſſembled.

After having obſerved theſe effects at the public proceſs, it behoved them, in the next place, to endeavour to diſcover their cauſes, and enquire into the proofs of the exiſtence and utility of the magnetiſm. The queſtion of its exiſtence is firſt in order; that of its utility it were idle to examine, till the other ſhall have been fully reſolved. The animal magnetiſm may indeed exiſt without being uſeful, but it cannot be uſeful if it do not exiſt.

Of conſequence the firſt object of attention with the commiſſioners, and the direct tendency of their firſt experiments, ought

ought to be the aſcertaining this exiſtence. Again, this was itſelf an object of conſiderable comprehenſion, and had need of being ſimplified. The animal magnetiſm embraces the whole compaſs of nature; it is the vehicle, we are told, of the influence exerted upon us by the celeſtial bodies; the commiſſioners were of opinion, that they ought, in the firſt place, to leave this more extenſive influence out of the queſtion, and to conſider only that part of the fluid which is diffuſed over the earth, without troubling themſelves with whence it comes; in a word, to evince the action it exerciſes upon us, around us, and within the ſphere of our inſpection, before they undertook to examine its relation to the univerſe.

The moſt certain method of determining the exiſtence of the animal magnetic fluid, would have been, to have rendered its preſence capable of being perceived by the ſeneſs; but much time was not neceſſary to convince the commiſſioners that this fluid is too ſubtle to be ſubjected to their obſervation. It is not, like the electrical fluid, luminous and viſible; its action is not, like the attraction of the loadſtone, the object of our ſight; it has neither taſte nor ſmell; its proceſs is ſilent, and it ſurrounds you or penetrates your frame, without your being informed of its preſence by the ſenſe of touch. If therefore it exiſt in us and

and around us, it is after a manner perfectly insensible. There are persons among those who profess the magnetism, who pretend that it may sometimes be seen passing from the extremity of the fingers, which serve it for conductors, or who believe that they feel its passage when you guide your finger before their face, or along their hand. In the first of these cases, the emanation perceived is merely that of transpiration, which becomes completely visible when viewed through a solar microscope; in the second, the impression of cold or freshness which is felt, an impression by so much the more perceptible the warmer one is, results from the motion of the air which follows the finger, and the degree of whose temperature is always below that of animal heat. When, on the other hand, the finger is approached to the surface of the face, which is colder than the finger, and it is held at rest, the consequence is a sensation of heat, which is no other than the communication of the animal heat.

It is also pretended that this fluid has a smell, and that it is perceived when either the finger or an iron conductor is brought into contiguity with the nostrils; it is even said, that the sensation is different, according as the finger or the rod of iron is directed parallel with, or opposite to the poles. M. Deslon made the experiment upon

upon ſeveral of the commiſſioners; the commiſſioners themſelves have repeated it upon different ſubjects; not one has experienced this difference of ſenſation: and if, by giving a cloſe attention, any ſcent has been perceived, it has been that of the iron, when the rod has been preſented rubbed and heated; or that of the emanation of the tranſpiration, when the finger has been preſented, a ſcent frequently combined with that of the iron with which the finger itſelf has been impreſſed. Theſe effects have been erroneouſly attributed to the magnetiſm, but they may be traced in reality to natural and definite cauſes.

Indeed M. Deſlon has never inſiſted upon theſe tranſient impreſſions, he did not think they were to be offered in evidence; on the contrary he expreſsly aſſured the commiſſioners, that he could not demonſtrate to them the exiſtence of the magnetiſm, otherwiſe than by the action of this fluid, producing certain changes in animated bodies. This exiſtence is ſo much the more difficult to be demonſtrated by effects, which ſhall be incontrovertible, and whoſe cauſes ſhall be unequivocal; by authentic facts, in caſes where moral circumſtances cannot exert their influence: in a word, by proofs calculated to convince and compel the underſtanding, the only ones which can yield any ſolid ſatisfaction

to

to perſons really proficient in the ſtudy of nature.

The action of the magnetiſm upon animated bodies may be obſerved in two different ways; either as it conſiſts in that action continued for a long time, and in its ſalutary effects in the treatment of diſeaſes, or in its momentary effects upon the animal œconomy and the perceptible changes there produced. M. Deſlon inſiſted that the former of theſe methods ſhould be employed principally, and nearly excluſively; the commiſſioners have been of a different opinion, and their reaſons are as follow.

The majority of diſeaſes have their ſeat in the interior part of our frame. The collective experience of a great number of centuries has made us acquainted with the ſymptoms, which indicate and diſcriminate them; the ſame experience has taught the method in which they are to be treated. What is the object of the efforts of the phyſician in this method? It is not to oppoſe and to ſubdue nature, it is to aſſiſt her in her operations. Nature, ſays the father of the medical ſcience, cures the diſeaſed; but ſometimes ſhe encounters obſtacles, which conſtrain her in her courſe, and uſeleſsly conſume her ſtrength. The phyſician is the miniſter of nature; an attentive obſerver, he ſtudies the method in

 which

which ſhe proceeds. If that method be firm, ſtrong, regular and well directed, the phyſician looks on in ſilence, and bewares of diſturbing it by remedies which would at leaſt be uſeleſs; if the method be embarraſſed, he facilitates it; if it be too ſlow or too rapid, he accelerates or retards it. Sometimes, to accompliſh his object, he confines himſelf to the regulation of the diet: ſometimes he employs medicines. The action of a medicine, introduced into the human body, is a new force, combined with the principal force by which our life is maintained: if the remedy follow the ſame route, which this force has already opened for the expulſion of diſeaſes, it is uſeful, it is ſalutary; if it tend to open different routes, and to turn aſide this interior action, it is pernicious. In the mean time it muſt be confeſſed that this ſalutary or pernicious influence, real as it is, may frequently eſcape common obſervation. The natural hiſtory of man preſents us in this reſpect with very ſingular phenomena. It may be there ſeen that regimens the moſt oppoſite, have not prevented the attainment of an advanced old age. We may there ſee men, attacked according to all appearance with the ſame diſeaſe, recovering in the purſuit of oppoſite regimens, and in the uſe of remedies totally different from each other; nature is

in theſe inſtances ſufficiently powerful to maintain the vital principle in ſpite of the improper regimen, and to triumph at once over the diſtemper and the remedy. If it have this power of reſiſting the action of medicine, by a ſtill ſtronger reaſon it muſt have the power of operating without medicine. The experience of the efficacy of remedies is always therefore attended with ſome uncertainty; in the caſe of the magnetiſm the uncertainty has this addition, the uncertainty of its exiſtence. How then can we decide upon the action of an agent, whoſe exiſtence is conteſted, from the treatment of diſeaſes; when the effect of medicines is doubtful, whoſe exiſtence is not at all problematical?

The cure which is principally cited in favour of the magnetiſm is that of M. le baron de ——; all claſſes are acquainted with its hiſtory. We ſhall not here enter into a diſcuſſion of the facts; we ſhall not enquire whether the remedies precedingly employed might have contributed to this cure. On the one hand the very critical ſituation of the patient is admitted, and on the other the inefficacy of all the ordinary means of medical ſcience; the magnetiſm has been employed and M. le baron de —— has completely recovered. But might not a natural criſis have ſingly operated this recovery? A woman of low

rank and extremely poor, who lived at the Gros-caillou, was attacked in 1779 with a malignant fever in all its ſymptoms; ſhe reſolutely refuſed every aſſiſtance, ſhe only deſired that a veſſel which ſhe had near her ſhould be kept conſtantly repleniſhed with water: ſhe remained quiet upon the ſtraw which ſerved her for a bed, drinking water continually and doing nothing more. The diſeaſe developed itſelf, paſſed ſucceſſively through its different ſtages, and terminated in a complete cure *. Mademoiſelle G——, who lived at the leſſer royal mews, had two indurations formed in her right breaſt, which gave her great pain; a ſurgeon recommended to her the uſe of the Eau du Peintre as an excellent diſſolvent; at the ſame time informing her, that if this remedy did not ſucceed in a month, it would be neceſſary to extirpate them by inciſion. The young lady, terrified at this ſentence, conſulted M. Sallin, who gave it as his opinion that the indurations were ſuſceptible of reſolution; M. Bonvart, who was alſo conſulted, confirmed the opinion of M. Sallin. Before entering upon any courſe of remedy,

* The obſervation of this fact was laid in detail before the faculty of medicine at Paris, in an aſſembly de prima menſis, by M. Bourdois de la Mothe, phyſician of the charity of Saint-Sulpice, who viſited the ſick perſon regularly every day.

they

they prescribed dissipation; fifteen days after she was seized at the opera with a violent cough, and so profuse an expectoration, that she was obliged to be carried home; she spit in the space of four hours about three pints of a viscid lymph; one hour after this M. Sallin examined the breast, he discovered no trace of induration. M. Bouvart, called in the next day, proved on his part the happy effect of this natural crisis. If mademoiselle G—— had taken Eau du Peintre, the honour of her cure would have been attributed to this medicine.

The uninterrupted observation of ages proves, and the professors of physic acknowledge, that nature alone and without our interference, cures a great number of persons. If the magnetism were absolutely inactive, the patients, who undergo this method of cure, might be considered as abandoned to nature. It would be absurd to chuse a method of deciding upon the existence of this agent, which, by attributing to it all the cures performed by nature, would tend to prove that it had an action useful and curative, when in reality it might have no action at all.

Upon this head the commissioners are of the opinion of M. Mesmer. He rejected the cure of diseases, when this method of proving the magnetism was pro-

posed to him by a member of the academy of sciences: " It is a mistake," replied he, " to imagine that this kind of proof is " unanswerable; it cannot be demonstrat- " ed that either the physician or the me- " dicine causes the recovery of the pa- " tient *."

The treatment of diseases can therefore furnish nothing but a result, always uncertain, often deceitful; nor can this uncertainty be dissipated, and all the causes of illusion compensated, but by an infinity of cures, perhaps by the experience of successive centuries. The object and importance of the commission demand means of a speedier description. It was the duty of the commissioners to confine themselves to arguments purely physical, that is, to the momentaneous effects of the fluid upon the animal frame, excluding from these effects all the illusions which might mix with them, and assuring themselves that they could proceed from no other cause than the animal magnetism.

They proposed to make experiments upon single subjects, who might be willing to submit to the various experiments which they should invent; and who, some of them by their simplicity, and others by their intelligence, should be capable of

* M. Mesmer, Historical Abridgement, pages 35, 37.

giving

giving an exact and faithful account account of their sensations. These experiments we shall not confine ourselves to relate in the order of time, but shall follow the order of the facts they were intended to elucidate.

The commissioners in the first place resolved to make their first experiments upon themselves, and personally to experience the action of the magnetism. They were extremely curious to become acquainted by their own sensations with the effects ascribed to this agent. They therefore submitted themselves to these effects, and in such a disposition, that they would not have been sorry to have undergone some accidents and a partial derangement of health, which being evidently produced by the operation of the magnetism, should have enabled them to decide this important question upon the spot, and with their own testimony. But in submitting themselves to the magnetism in this manner, the commissioners have employed one necessary precaution. There is not an individual, in a state of the fullest health, who, if he paid a close attention to the point, would not be sensible to an infinity of interior motions and variations, either of a pain infinitely slight, or of heat in different parts of his body; these variations which exist at all times are independent of the magnetism. To

turn and fix in this manner ones attention upon onefelf, is not perhaps itfelf entirely without its effects. There is fo intimate a connection, whatever be the vehicle of that connection, between the volitions of the foul and the motions of the body, that it is not eafy to prefcribe limits to the influence of attention, which appears to be nothing more than a train of volitions, directed, conftantly and without interruption, to the fame object. When we recollect that the arm is moved by the will as it pleafes, how can we be certain, that the attention being fixed upon fome interior part of our frame, may not excite fome flight emotion in it, direct the heat towards it, and fo modify its actual fituation as to produce in it new fenfations? The firft thing therefore, to which the commiffioners were bound to attend, was not to obferve too minutely what paffed within them. If the magnetifm were a real and operative caufe, there was no need that it fhould be made an object of thought, in order to its action and manifefting itfelf: it ought, fo to exprefs ourfelves, to compel and arreft the attention, and to render itfelf perceptible to a mind that fhould even be diftracted from it by defign.

But in determining to make experiments upon themfelves, the commiffioners unanimoufly refolved to make thofe experiments private, without admitting any

ftranger,

ſtranger, except M. Deſlon, by whom the operation was to be performed, or ſuch perſons as they ſhould chuſe; in like manner they engaged not to ſubmit to the magnetiſm at the public proceſs, in order that they might diſcuſs freely their obſervations, and be in all events the ſole, or at leaſt the firſt judges of the ſymptoms obſerved.

In purſuance of theſe determinations, a particular apartment and a ſeparate bucket were deſtined for their uſe in the houſe of M. Deſlon, and the commiſſioners repaired thither once in the courſe of every week. The operation was continued in each experiment for two hours and a half, the branch of iron being in contact with the left hypochonder, ſurrounded with a cord of communication, and forming from time to time the chain of fingers and thumbs. They were magnetiſed either by M. Deſlon, or, in his abſence, by one of his pupils; ſome of them for a longer time and more frequently than others, and thoſe with whom this was the caſe were the commiſſioners who appeared from conſtitution and habit the moſt ſuſceptible. The operation was performed ſometimes with the finger and the rod of iron preſented and guided along the different parts of the body, ſometimes by the application of the hands and the preſſure of the fingers, either

upon

upon the hypochonders, or upon the pit of the ſtomach.

Not one of the commiſſioners felt any ſenſation, or at leaſt none which ought to be aſcribed to the action of the magnetiſm. Some of the commiſſioners are of a robuſt conſtitution; others have more delicate habits, and are ſubject to interruptions of their health: one of theſe laſt, was ſenſible of a ſlight pain at the pit of the ſtomach, in conſequence of a conſiderable preſſure that was employed upon that part. This pain continued all that and the next day, and was accompanied with a ſenſation of fatigue and dejection. Another felt, in the afternoon of one of the days in which the experiments were performed, a ſlight irritation of the nerves, to which he is very ſubject. A third, endowed with a ſtill greater ſenſibility, and eſpecially with an extreme reſtleſſneſs of the nerves, was ſubject to a higher degree of pain and a more perceptible irritation; but theſe leſſer accidents are the reſult of perpetual and ordinary variations in the ſtate of their health, and are of conſequence foreign to the operation they had undergone, or proceed only from the preſſure employed upon the region of the ſtomach. The commiſſioners do not ſpeak of theſe ſlight details, but from a ſcrupulous fidelity; they relate them, becauſe they have impoſed it

as

as a law upon themſelves conſtantly and in every particular to ſay the truth.

The commiſſioners could not avoid being ſtruck with the difference of the private experiment made upon themſelves from the public proceſs. All was calm and ſilence in the one, all reſtleſſneſs and agitation in the other; there multiplied ſymptoms, violent criſes, the ordinary ſtate both of body and mind interrupted and overthrown, and nature wrought up to the higheſt pitch; here the body free from pain, and the mind from anxiety, nature preſerving her ordinary courſe and her equilibrium, in a word the abſolute privation of every kind of effect: the ſtupendous influence, which creates ſuch an aſtoniſhment in the public proceſs, appears no longer; the magnetiſm ſtripped of its energy ſeems perfectly ſupine and inactive.

The commiſſioners, having at firſt ſubmitted to the experiment only once a week, were deſirous to aſcertain whether a continuity of experiment would produce any effect; they ſubmitted to it three days ſucceſſively, but their inſenſibility was the ſame, and the magnetiſm appeared with reſpect to them perfectly impotent. This experiment, made at once upon eight different ſubjects, ſeveral of whom were ſubject to habitual derangements of health, authoriſes the concluſion that the magnetiſm

netiſm has little or no action in a ſtate of health, or even in a ſtate of leſſer infirmity. We then reſolved to make experiments upon perſons really diſeaſed, and we choſe them out of the lower claſs.

Seven of theſe were aſſembled at Paſſy, at the houſe of Dr. Franklin; the operation was performed upon them by M. Deſlon in the preſence of all the commiſſioners.

The widow Saint-Amand, aſthmatic, having the belly, legs and thighs ſwelled; and dame Anſeaume, who had a ſwelling upon her thigh, felt no ſenſation; the little Claude Renard, a child of ſix years of age, ſcrophulous, almoſt conſumptive, having the knees ſwelled, the legs bent inward, and the articulation nearly deprived of motion, a very intereſting child, and poſſeſſing a greater degree of underſtanding than is uſual at his age, was likewiſe conſcious to no ſenſation; any more than Geneviève Leroux, nine years of age, ſubject to convulſions, and to a diſorder greatly reſembling that which is called St. Vitus's Dance. François Grenet experienced ſome effects; he had a diſtemper in his eyes, particularly in the right, in which he had ſcarcely any ſight, and in which there was a conſiderable tumour. When the operation was directed towards the left eye, by approaching and moving backward

backward and forward the thumb very near and for a confiderable time, he was fenfible of a pain in the ball of the eye, and the eye watered. When the operation was directed to the right eye, which was the moft difordered, he felt no fenfation in it; he felt the fame pain in the left eye, and nothing in any other part of the body.

Dame Charpentier, who had been thrown down againft a log of wood by a cow two years before, had experienced the moft unfortunate confequences from this accident; fhe loft her fight, recovered it afterwards in part, but remained in a ftate of habitual infirmities; fhe declared that fhe had two ruptures, and the belly of fo great fenfibility, that fhe could not bear the preffure of the ftrings of her petticoats: this fenfibility belongs to the cafe of nervous irritation; the flighteft preffure upon the region of the belly is capable of determining this irritation, and producing, through the correfpondence of the nerves, effects in every part of the body.

The operation was performed upon this woman as upon the reft by the application and the preffure of the fingers; the preffure was extremely painful to her: afterwards, in directing the finger towards the rupture, fhe complained of a pain in her head; the finger being placed before

her

her face, ſhe ſaid ſhe could not draw her breath. Upon the repeated motion of the finger upwards and downwards, ſhe had ſudden ſtarts of the head and ſhoulders, like thoſe which are commonly occaſioned by ſurpriſe mixed with terror, for inſtance that of a perſon who has ſome drops of cold water ſuddenly thrown in his face. She appeared to have the ſame ſtartings when her eyes were cloſed. The fingers being held under her noſe, while her eyes were ſhut, ſhe complained of a ſenſation of faintneſs ſo long as they were continued there. The ſeventh ſubject, Joſeph Ennuyé, experienced ſenſations of a ſimilar nature, but much leſs conſiderable.

Of theſe ſeven patients four felt no ſenſation at all; three experienced ſome effects from the operation. Theſe effects deſerved to engage the attention of the commiſſioners, and demanded an accurate examination.

The commiſſioners, to obtain further light, and to define their ideas upon this part of the ſubject, reſolved to make the experiment upon patients, placed in other circumſtances, and ſelected from the polite world; ſuch as could not be ſuſpected of ſiniſter views, and whoſe underſtanding made them capable of enquiring into and giving a faithful account of their ſenſations. Meſdames de B—— and de V——,

meſſieurs

meſſieurs M—— and R—— were admitted to the private bucket together with the commiſſioners; they were intreated to remark their ſenſations, without fixing upon them too regular an attention. M. M—— and madame de V—— were the only perſons who experienced any ſenſation. M. M—— had an indolent tumour over the whole articulation of the knee, and a conſtant pain in the patella. He declared, during the operation, that he felt nothing in any part of his body, except in the moment that the finger was guided before the diſeaſed knee; he then thought that he felt a ſlight degree of heat in the place, in which he has habitually the ſenſation of pain. Madame de V——, attacked with a nervous diſorder, was ſeveral times upon the point of falling aſleep during the operation. The experiment having continued for an hour and nineteen minutes without interruption, and for the greater part by the application of the hands, ſhe was ſenſible to nothing but a ſenſation of irritation and dejection. Theſe two ſubjects underwent the experiment only once. M. R——, whoſe diſtemper was the remainder of an obſtruction in the liver, the conſequence of a very violent diſorder of that kind ill cured, underwent the operation three times and felt nothing. Madame de B——, ſeverely attacked with

obſtructions, underwent the experiment conſtantly at the ſame time with the commiſſioners, and felt nothing; it is neceſſary to obſerve, that ſhe ſubmitted to the magnetiſm with an extreme tranquility, which originated in the higheſt degree of incredulity.

Experiments were made at other times upon different ſubjects, but without the aſſiſtance of the bucket. One of the commiſſioners, in a violent head-ach, had the operation performed upon him by M. Deſlon for half an hour; one of the ſymptoms of his diſorder was an extreme cold in his feet. M. Deſlon brought his foot near that of the patient, the foot was never the warmer, and the head-ach laſted its ordinary term. The patient, having placed himſelf near a fire, obtained from it the ſalutary effects which heat has conſtantly procured him, without experiencing, either during that day or the night following, any effect from the magnetiſm.

Dr. Franklin, though the weakneſs of his health hindered him from coming to Paris, and aſſiſting at the experiments which were there made, was magnetiſed by M. Deſlon at his own houſe at Paſſy. The aſſembly was numerous; every perſon who was preſent underwent the operation. Some ſick perſons, who had come with M. Deſlon, were ſubject to the effects of the

the magnetiſm in the ſame manner as at the public proceſs; but madame de B——, Dr. Franklin, his two relations, his ſecretary, and an American officer, felt no ſenſation, though one of Dr. Franklin's relations was convaleſcent, and the American officer had at that time a regular fever.

The experiments we have related, furniſh a number of facts, calculated to illuſtrate, and fit to be compared with each other, and from which the commiſſioners were at liberty to deduce certain inferences. Of fourteen ſick perſons five only appeared to feel any effect from the operation, nine felt no effect at all. The commiſſioner, who had the head-ach and coldneſs in the feet, derived no benefit from the magnetiſm, nor did his feet recover their natural heat. This agent has not therefore the property which has been attributed to it of communicating heat to the feet. The magnetiſm has alſo been ſaid to have the property of diſcovering the ſpecies, and particularly the ſeat of diſeaſes, by the pain, which the action of this fluid infallibly occaſions in that part. Such an advantage would be of great conſequence; the fluid which was the inſtrument of it would be a valuable means in the hands of the phyſician, often deceived by equivocal ſymptoms: but François Grenet felt no ſenſation, no pain, but in the eye leaſt

affected. If the redneſs and tumour of the other eye had not furniſhed external ſymptoms, in judging from the effect of the magnetiſm we ſhould have been led to conclude that it was undiſtempered. M. R—— and madame de B——, both attacked with obſtructions, and madame de B—— with great ſeverity, as they were conſcious to no ſenſation, would have received no intelligence, either reſpecting the ſpecies, or the ſeat of their diſeaſe. And yet obſtructions are among the diſorders, which are ſaid to be particularly ſubject to the action of the magnetiſm; ſince according to the new theory the free and rapid circulation of this fluid through the nerves, is a means of opening the channels and deſtroying the obſtacles, that is, the obſtructions, which it encounters in its paſſage. It is at the ſame time ſaid that the magnetiſm is the touchſtone of health: if therefore M. R—— and madame de B—— had not experienced the derangements and the ſufferings inſeparable from obſtructions, they would have had a right to believe that they enjoyed the beſt health in the world. The ſame thing may be ſaid of the American officer: the magnetiſm therefore announced as the diſcoverer of diſeaſes completely failed of its effect.

The heat that M. M—— felt in the patella, is an effect too ſlight and fugitive to authoriſe any concluſions. It may be ſuſpected that it proceeded from the cauſe already deſcanted on, a too great attention to obſerve what paſſes within us: the ſame attention would diſcover ſimilar ſenſations at any other time, when the magnetiſm was not employed. The drowſineſs experienced by madame de V—— muſt undoubtedly be aſcribed to the regularity and fatigue of preſerving the ſame ſituation; if ſhe was ſenſible to any vaporous emotion, it muſt be remembered that it is a known property of nervous affections, to have much dependency upon the attention that is paid them; to renew them it is only neceſſary to hear them ſpoken of, or to think of them. It is eaſy to judge what ought to be expected from a woman, whoſe nerves are extremely irritable, and who, being magnetiſed for an hour and nineteen minutes, had during that time no other ſubject of reflection than that of the diſorders which are habitual to her. She might have had a nervous criſis more conſiderable than that we have deſcribed, without our having a right to be ſurpriſed at it.

There remains then only the effects produced upon dame Charpentier, François Grenet and Joſeph Ennuyé, which

can be ſuppoſed to derive from the operation of the magnetiſm. In comparing theſe three particular facts to the reſt, the commiſſioners were aſtoniſhed that three ſubjects of the lower claſs ſhould be the only ones who felt any thing from the operation, while thoſe of a more elevated rank, of more enlightened underſtandings, and better qualified to deſcribe their ſenſations, have felt nothing. Without doubt François Grenet experienced a pain and a watering in the eye when the thumb was approached very near to it; dame Charpentier complained, that in touching her ſtomach the preſſure correſponded to her rupture; and the preſſure might have been in part the cauſe of what ſhe felt; but the commiſſioners ſuſpected that theſe ſenſations were augmented by moral cauſes.

Let us repreſent to ourſelves the ſituation of a perſon of the lower claſs, and of conſequence ignorant, attacked with a diſtemper and deſirous of a cure, introduced with ſome degree of ceremony to a large company, partly compoſed of phyſicians, where an operation is performed upon him totally new, and from which he perſuades himſelf before hand that he is about to experience prodigious effects. Let us add to this that he is paid for his compliance, that he thinks he ſhall contribute more to our ſatisfaction by profeſſing to

experience

experience ſenſations of ſome kind; and we ſhall have definite cauſes to which to attribute theſe effects; we ſhall at leaſt have juſt reaſon to doubt whether their true cauſe be the magnetiſm.

Beſide this it may be enquired, why the magnetiſm produced theſe effects upon perſons, who knew what was done to them, and might imagine they had an intereſt in ſaying what they ſaid, while it took no ſort of hold upon the little Claude Renard, upon an organiſation endowed with all the delicacy of infancy, ſo irritable, ſo ſuſceptible? The ſound underſtanding and ingenuous temper of this child evince the veracity of his relation. Why too has this agent produced no effect upon Geneviève Leroux, who was in a perpetual ſtate of convulſion? Her nerves were certainly ſufficiently irritable, how comes it that the magnetiſm did not diſplay its power, either in augmenting, or diminiſhing her convulſions? Her indifference and impaſſibility induced the belief, that the reaſon of her having felt nothing, was the idiotiſm which did not permit her to judge that ſhe ought to have felt any thing.

From theſe facts the commiſſioners are at liberty to obſerve, that the magnetiſm has ſeemed to have no exiſtence for thoſe ſubjects, who have ſubmitted to it with any degree of incredulity; that the com-

missioners, even those who have their nerves most irritable, having expressly turned their attention to other objects, and having armed themselves with that philosophic doubt which ought always to accompany enquiry, have felt none of those sensations, which were experienced by the three patients of the lower class; and they have a right to suspect that these sensations, supposing their reality, were the fruits of anticipated persuasion, and might be operated by the mere force of imagination. Of this suspicion another class of experiments has been the result. Their subsequent researches were directed towards a new object; it was necessary to destroy or confirm the suspicion they had formed, to determine to what degree the power of the imagination can influence our sensations, and to demonstrate whether it can be the cause, in whole or in part, of the effects attributed to the magnetism.

At this time the commissioners heard of the experiments, which were made at the house of M. the dean of the faculty by M. Jumelin, doctor of physic; they were desirous of seeing these experiments, and they met M. Jumelin in a body at the house of M. Majault, one of the commissioners. M. Jumelin declared to them that he was a disciple neither of M. Mesmer, nor of M. Deslon; he had learned

nothing

nothing reſpecting the animal magnetiſm from them, but had formed his principles and digeſted his proceſs from what he had heard upon the ſubject in converſation. His principles conſiſt in regarding the animal magnetic fluid, as a fluid which circulates in the human body, and which flows from it, but which is eſſentially the ſame with the principle of animal heat; like all other fluids he conceived that it tended to an equilibrium, and that it therefore paſſes from the body in which the greateſt quantity of it reſides, into that which has the leaſt. His method does not differ from that of meſſieurs Meſmer and Deſlon leſs than his principles; like them he performs the operation with the finger and the rod of iron as conductors, and by the application of the hands, but without any diſtinction of poles.

Eight men and two women ſubmitted to the operation in the firſt experiment, and felt nothing; at length a woman, who waits in the hall of M. Alphonſe le Roy, doctor of phyſic, having been magnetiſed in the forehead, but without touching her, ſaid that ſhe felt the ſenſation of heat. M. Jumelin guiding his hand, and preſenting the five extremities of his fingers over the whole of her face, ſhe ſaid that ſhe felt as it were a flame, that paſſed from place to place; magnetiſed in the ſtomach

ſhe ſaid that ſhe felt heat; magnetiſed upon the back ſhe made the ſame declaration: ſhe alſo ſaid that ſhe felt hot in every part of her body, and that her head ached.

The commiſſioners, obſerving that, of eleven perſons that underwent the experiment, one only had been ſenſible to the magnetiſm of M. Jumelin, were of opinion that this perſon had experienced certain ſenſations, only becauſe ſhe had probably an imagination more eaſily excited than the reſt: the opportunity was favourable for clearing up the point. The ſenſibility of this woman being perfectly eſtabliſhed, the buſineſs was only to protect her from the illuſions of the imagination, or at leaſt to leave her imagination without any thing to direct its operations. The commiſſioners propoſed to blindfold her, in order to obſerve what her ſenſations would be, when ſhe could no longer know any thing reſpecting the conduct of the experiment. She was accordingly blindfolded and magnetiſed; the phenomena no longer anſwered to the places towards which the magnetiſm was directed. Magnetiſed ſucceſſively upon the ſtomach and in the back, ſhe felt only a heat in her head, a pain in both eyes and in the left ear.

The bandage was removed from her eyes, and M. Jumelin having applied his hands

hands upon the hypochonders, ſhe ſaid that ſhe felt heat; after a few minutes ſhe ſaid that ſhe was ready to faint, and ſhe fainted in effect. When ſhe was tolerably recovered, the experiment was reſumed, ſhe was blindfolded, M. Jumelin was removed, ſilence recommended, and the woman was induced to believe that the operation was performing. The effects were the ſame, though no operation, either near or diſtant was performed; ſhe felt the ſame heat, the ſame pain in her eyes and in her ears; beſides which ſhe felt a heat in her back and loins.

After a quarter of an hour, a ſign was made to M. Jumelin to magnetiſe her in the ſtomach, ſhe felt no ſenſation; in the back, it was the ſame thing. The ſenſations diminiſhed inſtead of augmenting. The pains in her head continued, the heat in her back and loins ceaſed.

We ſee in this inſtance certain effects produced, and theſe ſimilar to thoſe which were experienced by the three ſubjects, reſpecting whom the experiment has already been detailed. But the former and the latter were obtained in different methods; it follows that this difference is of no conſequence. The proceſs of meſſieurs Meſmer and Deſlon, and an oppoſite proceſs have produced the ſame phenomena. The diſtinction of poles is therefore chimerical.

It

It may be obſerved that while the woman was permitted to ſee the operation, ſhe placed her ſenſations preciſely in the part towards which it was directed; that on the other hand when ſhe did not ſee the operation, ſhe placed them at hazard, and in parts very diſtant from thoſe which were the object of the magnetiſm. It was natural to conclude that theſe ſenſations, real or pretended, were determined by the imagination. Of this we were convinced when we ſaw that being entirely at reſt, the preceding ſenſations having ceaſed, and the bandage being fixed over her eyes, this woman experienced all the ſame effects, though no operation was performed; but the demonſtration was complete, when after a remiſſion of a quarter of an hour, her imagination being undoubtedly cooled and worn down, the effects, in the room of augmenting, diminiſhed at the moment in which the operation was actually renewed.

If ſhe was ſeized with a faintneſs, women are ſometimes liable to this accident from their garments being tight or otherwiſe burdenſome. The application of the hands upon the hypochonders was capable of producing the ſame effect upon a woman extremely ſuſceptible; but there is no need of having recourſe to this cauſe to explain the appearance. The weather

weather was extremely hot, the woman had unqueſtionably felt ſome emotion in the beginning of the experiment, ſhe had made an effort upon herſelf to ſubmit to a new and unknown operation, and it is by no means extraordinary that an effort, continued for a longer time than the conſtitution will bear, ſhould occaſion a propenſity to faint.

This ſwoon had therefore a natural known cauſe, but the ſenſations, which ſhe experienced when no operation was performed upon her, could be only the reſult of imagination. In ſimilar experiments, which M. Jumelin made in the ſame place the next day, the commiſſioners being preſent, upon a man who was blindfolded, and upon a woman who was not blindfolded, the reſult was preciſely the ſame; it was evident their anſwers were determined by the queſtions that were put to them, that is, the queſtion pointed out where the ſenſation was expected to be; in the room of directing the magnetiſm upon them, all that was done was the exalting and directing their imagination. A child of five years of age being afterwards magnetiſed, felt nothing but the heat which he had juſt before contracted at play.

Theſe experiments appeared ſufficiently important to the commiſſioners, for them

to

to desire a repetition of them, in order to obtain further light into the subject, and M. Jumelin had the complaisance to comply with their request. It would be to no purpose to object, that the method of M. Jumelin was a bad one; for at the present moment it was not proposed to bring the magnetism, but the imagination to the proof.

The commissioners agreed to blindfold subjects who had already undergone the magnetical operation, for the most part not to magnetise them at all, but to put to them interrogations, so framed as to point out to them their answers. This mode of proceeding was not calculated to deceive them, it only misled their imagination. In reality, when no operation was performed upon them, their sole answer ought to have been, that they felt no sensation; and when the operation was performed, the impression they felt, not the manner in which they were interrogated, ought to have dictated their replies.

The commissioners adjourned themselves to the house of M. Jumelin; they began with an experiment upon his servant. They fixed a bandage over his eyes, prepared for the purpose, and which they employed in all the succeeding experiments. The bandage was made of two calottes of elastic gum, whose concavity was filled with edredon;

edredon; the whole inclosed and sown up in two pieces of stuff of a circular form. These pieces of stuff were then fastened to each other, and to two strings which were tied in a knot at the back part of the head. Placed over the eyes, they left in their interval room for the nose, and the entire liberty of respiration, without the person blindfolded being permitted to receive even the smallest particle of light, either through, or above, or below the bandage. These precautions having been contrived, with an equal view to the convenience of the subject, and the certainty of the result, the servant of M. Jumelin was persuaded that the operation was performing upon him. Upon this he felt an almost universal sensation of heat, and certain emotions in the region of the belly, together with an extreme heaviness; by degrees he grew drowsy and appeared upon the point of falling asleep. This experiment proves what we have already said, that the symptom of drowsiness is the effect of situation and weariness, not of the magnetism.

The same person being afterwards magnetised with his eyes uncovered, and a rod of iron being presented to his forehead, he experienced sensations of pricking: the bandage being then replaced and the circumstance repeated, he was conscious to

no ſenſation. The rod of iron was then removed, and the patient being interrogated if he felt nothing in his forehead, he declared that he felt ſomething move backward and forward from one ſide of it to the other.

M. B——, a man of learning, and particularly acquainted with the ſcience of medicine, was then blindfolded, and preſented us with the ſame ſpectacle, feeling certain ſenſations when he was not acted upon, and often feeling nothing when the operation was performed. Theſe ſenſations went to ſuch a length, that, previouſly to the being magnetiſed in any manner, but believing that the operation had been performing for ten minutes, he felt a heat in his loins which he compared to that of a ſtove. It is evident that M. B—— had a very ſtrong ſenſation, ſince, in order to convey an idea of it, he thought it neceſſary to have recourſe to ſuch a compariſon; this ſenſation however he owed ſolely to imagination, which was the only agent concerned in the affair.

The commiſſioners, particularly thoſe of the faculty of medicine, made an infinite number of experiments upon different ſubjects, whom they either magnetiſed themſelves, or perſuaded that they underwent the operation. They performed the operation indifferently, either oppoſite to, or

in the direction of the poles or at right angles with them, and in each caſe obtained the ſame effects; experiencing in all theſe experiments no other difference, than that of an imagination more or leſs ſuſceptible*.

They

* M. Sigault, doctor of the faculty of Paris, well known for his invention of the operation of the ſymphyſis of the oſſa pubis, made a number of experiments, tending to prove that the magnetiſm is merely an imaginary power. The following is the detail which he made in a letter, dated July the 30th, 1784, and addreſſed to one of the commiſſioners.

"Having given the perſons who inhabited a large
" houſe in the Marais, to underſtand that I was a pupil
" of M. Meſmer, I produced various effects upon the
" woman of the houſe. The magiſterial tone and the
" ſerious air I affected, together with certain geſtures,
" made a very great impreſſion upon her, which ſhe
" at firſt was deſirous to conceal from me; but having
" guided my hand upon the region of the heart, I felt
" that it palpitated. The ſtate of oppreſſion in which
" ſhe appeared likewiſe indicated a contraction of the
" cheſt. Other ſymptoms were connected with theſe;
" her face became convulſed, her eyes wandered, ſhe
" at length fell into a ſwoon, then threw up her dinner,
" had ſeveral ſtools, and was reduced to a ſtate of
" weakneſs and ſinking, perfectly incredible. I re-
" peated the ſame trick upon ſeveral perſons, and ſuc-
" ceeded more or leſs, according to their different
" degrees of ſenſibility and credulity.

"A celebrated artiſt, maſter of deſign to the chil-
" dren of one of our princes, complained for ſeveral
" days of an extreme head-ach; he acquainted me
" with it upon the Pont-royal; having perſuaded him
" that I was initiated in the myſteries of M. Meſmer,
" I expelled his head-ach almoſt inſtantaneouſly by the
" means of a few geſtures, to his great aſtoniſhment.

" I

They were therefore convinced that the imagination alone is capable of producing

"I produced the ſame effects upon the apprentice of
" a hatter in the ſame diſtemper. The lad felt nothing
" in conſequence of my firſt geſtures; I then laid my
" hand upon his falſe ribs, bidding him at the ſame time
" look in my face. He immediately felt a contraction
" of the cheſt, palpitations of the heart, yawnings, and
" an extreme dejection. He doubted no longer of the
" power I poſſeſſed over him. I then guided my finger
" over the part affected, and aſked him what he felt.
" He replied that his pain diſlodged itſelf and deſcended.
" I aſſured him that I would guide it towards his arm,
" and make it come out at his thumb, at the ſame time
" ſqueezing it with conſiderable force. He took me
" at my word, and was perfectly well for two hours.
" At that period he ſtopped me in the ſtreet to tell me
" that his pain was returned. This effect ſeems to be
" the ſame with that produced by certain dentiſts upon
" the mental faculties of thoſe, who go to them to have a
" tooth drawn.

"Further laſtly, being in the parlour of a convent,
" rue du Colombier, fauxbourg Saint Germains, a
" young lady ſaid to me: I underſtand, ſir, that you are
" a pupil of M. Meſmer. I am ſo, replied I; and
" I can perform the magnetical operation upon you,
" notwithſtanding the intervention of the grate. At
" the ſame time I preſented my finger; ſhe was terri-
" fied, trembled extremely, and beſought me for God's
" ſake to proceed no farther. Her emotion was ſuch,
" that, if I had perſevered in my experiment, ſhe would
" infallibly have fallen into convulſions."

M. Sigault relates that he had himſelf felt the power of imagination. One day, the operator having undertaken to perform upon him the magnetical operation to convince him of its reality, at the moment he had determined to touch him, he felt a contraction of the cheſt, and a palpitation of the heart. But having immediately compoſed himſelf, the geſtures and the proceſs of the magnetiſm were employed in vain, and made no impreſſion upon him.

various ſenſations, and cauſing the patient to experience both pain and heat, and even a very conſiderable degree of heat, in all parts of the body, and they concluded that it of courſe entered for a conſiderable ſhare into the effects attributed to the animal magnetiſm. It muſt at the ſame time be admitted, that the proceſs of the magnetiſm produces in the animated body changes more diſtinguiſhed, and derangements more conſiderable, than thoſe we have juſt reported. None of thoſe ſubjects, whom we have hitherto deſcribed as the imaginary objects of the magnetical operation, were ſo far impreſſed as to produce convulſions; it was therefore a new ſubject for the experiments of the commiſſioners, to enquire, whether by the mere energies of the imagination it were poſſible to produce criſes, ſimilar to thoſe which we have ſtated in the public proceſs.

Many experiments were thought of for the deciſion of this queſtion. When a tree has been touched according to the principles and method of the magnetiſm, every perſon who ſtops under it, ought to experience in a greater or leſs degree the effects of this agent; there have even been ſome in this ſituation who have ſwooned, or experienced convulſions. We communicated our ideas upon this ſubject to M. Deſlon, who replied, that the experiment

ought to ſucceed, provided the ſubject were extremely ſuſceptible; and it was agreed that it ſhould be made at Paſſy in the preſence of Dr. Franklin. The neceſſity that the ſubject ſhould be ſuſceptible, led the commiſſioners to conceive, that to render the experiment deciſive and unanſwerable, it was neceſſary that it ſhould be made upon a perſon of M. Deſlon's choice, and of whoſe ſuſceptibility to the operations of the magnetiſm he was already convinced. M. Deſlon therefore brought with him a boy of about twelve years of age; an apricot tree was fixed upon in the orchard of Dr. Franklin's garden, conſiderably diſtant from any other tree, and calculated for the preſervation of the magnetical power which might be impreſſed upon it. M. Deſlon was led thither alone to perform the operation, the boy in the mean time remaining in the houſe, and another perſon along with him. We could have wiſhed that M. Deſlon had not been preſent at the ſubſequent part of the experiment, but he declared that he could not anſwer for its ſucceſs, if he did not direct his cane and his countenance towards the tree, in order to augment the action of the magnetiſm. It was therefore reſolved, that M. Deſlon ſhould be placed at the greateſt poſſible diſtance, and that ſome of the commiſſioners ſhould ſtand between

tween him and the boy, in order to afcertain the impracticability of any fignals being made by M. Deflon, or any intelligence being maintained between them. Thefe precautions in an experiment the effence of which muft be authenticity, are indifpenfible, without giving the perfon with refpect to whom they are employed a right to think himfelf offended.

The boy was then brought into the orchard his eyes covered with the bandage, prefented fucceffively to four trees upon which the operation had not been performed, and caufed to embrace each of them for the fpace of two minutes, the mode of communication which had been prefcribed by M. Deflon himfelf.

M. Deflon, prefent, and at a confiderable diftance, directed his cane towards the tree which had been the object of his operations.

At the firft tree the boy being interrogated at the end of a minute, declared that he perfpired in large drops; he coughed, fpit, and complained of a flight pain in his head; the diftance of the tree which had been magnetifed was about twenty feven feet.

At the fecond tree he felt the fenfations of ftupefaction and pain in his head; the diftance was thirty fix feet.

At the third tree the ſtupefaction and head-ach increaſed conſiderably; he ſaid that he believed he was approaching to the tree which had been magnetiſed; the diſtance was then about thirty eight feet.

In fine at the fourth tree which had not been rendered the object of the operation, and at the diſtance of about twenty four feet from the tree which had, the boy fell into a criſis; he fainted away, his limbs ſtiffened, and he was carried to a neighbouring graſs-plot, where M. Deſlon haſtened to his aſſiſtance and recovered him.

The reſult of this experiment is entirely contrary to the theory of the animal magnetiſm. M. Deſlon accounted for it by obſerving, that all the trees by their very nature, participated of the magnetiſm, and that their magnetiſm was beſide reinforced by his preſence. But in that caſe a perſon ſenſible to the power of the magnetiſm, could not hazard a walk in a garden without the riſk of convulſions; an aſſertion confuted by the experience of every day. The preſence of M. Deſlon had no greater influence here, than in the coach, in which the boy came along with him, was placed oppoſite to him, and felt nothing. If he had experienced no ſenſation even under the tree which was magnetiſed, it might have been ſaid that at leaſt upon that day he

he had not been sufficiently susceptible: but the boy fell into a crisis under a tree which was not magnetised; the crisis was therefore the effect of no physical or exterior cause, but is to be ascribed solely to the influence of imagination. The experiment is therefore entirely conclusive: the boy knew that he was about to be led to a tree upon which the magnetical operation had been performed, his imagination was struck, it was exalted by the successive steps of the experiment, and at the fourth tree it was raised to the height necessary to produce the crisis.

Other experiments were made calculated to support this, and the result was the same. One day when the commissioners were all together at Passy at the house of Dr. Franklin, and M. Deslon with them, they previously intreated the latter to bring some of his patients with him, selecting those of the lower class, who were most susceptible to the magnetism. M. Deslon brought two women; and while he was employed in performing the operation upon Dr. Franklin and several persons in another apartment, the two women were separated, and placed in different rooms.

One of them, dame P——, had films over her eyes; but as she could always see a little, the bandage already described was employed. She was persuaded that M.

Deſlon had been brought into the room to perform the magnetical operation; ſilence was recommended; three commiſſioners were preſent, one to interrogate, another to make minutes of the tranſaction, and the third to perſonate M. Deſlon. The converſation was pretended to be addreſſed to M. Deſlon; he was deſired to begin the operation; the three commiſſioners in the mean time remained perfectly quiet and ſolely occupied in obſerving her ſymptoms. At the end of three minutes the patient began to feel a nervous ſhuddering; ſhe had then ſucceſſively a pain in the back of her head, in her arms, a creeping in her hands, that was her expreſſion, ſhe grew ſtiff, ſtruck her hands violently together, roſe from her ſeat, ſtamped with her feet: the criſis had all the regular ſymptoms. Two other commiſſioners, who were in the adjoining room with the door ſhut, heard the ſtamping of the feet and the clapping of the hands, and without ſeeing any thing were witneſſes to this noiſy experiment.

The two commiſſioners we have mentioned were with the other patient, mademoiſelle B——, who was ſubject to nervous diſtempers. No bandage was employed upon her, but her eyes were at liberty; ſhe was ſeated with her face towards a door which was ſhut, and perſuaded

ſuaded that M. Deſlon was on the other ſide, employed in performing upon her the magnetical operation. This had ſcarcely taken place a minute, before ſhe began to feel the ſymptom of ſhuddering; in another minute ſhe had a chattering of the teeth and an univerſal heat; in fine in the third minute ſhe fell into a regular criſis. Her reſpiration was quick, ſhe ſtretched out both her arms behind her back, twiſting them extremely, and bending her body forward: her whole body trembled; the chattering of her teeth became ſo loud that it might be heard in the open air; ſhe bit her hand, and that with ſo much force, that the marks of the teeth remained perfectly viſible.

It is proper to obſerve that neither of theſe ſubjects were touched in any manner; their pulſe was not even felt, that it might not be poſſible to ſay that the magnetic fluid was communicated; the criſes however were complete. The commiſſioners, who had been deſirous to know the effect of the influence of the imagination, and to appreciate the ſhare it might have in the magnetical criſes, had now obtained all that they deſired. It is impoſſible to ſee this influence diſplayed in a clearer or more incontrovertible manner than in theſe two experiments. If the ſubjects have declared that their criſes were

ſtronger in the public treatment, it muſt be aſcribed to the power of communication poſſeſſed by the numerous emotions, and that in general every individual ſymptom has been increaſed by the contemplation of ſimilar ſymptoms.

We had occaſion to try a ſecond experiment upon dame P——, and to experience how much ſhe was under the dominion of her imagination. The experiment of the magnetic baſon was propoſed: this experiment conſiſts in diſcovering among a number of baſons one that has been magnetiſed. They are ſucceſſively preſented to a patient ſuſceptible to the magnetiſm; he ought to fall into a criſis, or at leaſt to experience ſenſible effects, when the magnetic baſon is preſented to him, he ought to be perfectly indifferent to all the reſt. All that was neceſſary according to the recommendation of M. Deſlon, was to preſent them to him in the direction of the poles, in order that he who preſents the baſon may not himſelf magnetiſe the patient, and that there may be no other effect than that of the magnetiſm of the baſon itſelf.

Dame P—— was ſent for to the arſenal to the houſe of M. Lavoiſier, where M. Deſlon was; ſhe began with falling into a criſis in the anti-chamber, before ſhe had ſeen either the commiſſioners or M. Deſlon, and

and merely from the knowledge ſhe had that ſhe was about to ſee him; a diſtinguiſhed effect of the influence of imagination.

When ſhe had been tolerably recovered, ſhe was led into the room deſtined for the experiment. Several china baſons were preſented to her which had not been magnetiſed; at the ſecond baſon ſhe began to feel the uſual ſymptoms, and at the fourth fell into a complete criſis. It may be objected that her actual ſtate was a ſtate of criſis, that it had begun in the anti-chamber, and was renewed by its own ſingle energy; but a circumſtance which is deciſive, is that having aſked for ſomething to drink, the baſon which had been magnetiſed by M. Deſlon himſelf was preſented to her; ſhe drank with perfect calmneſs and ſaid that ſhe felt herſelf much better. The baſon and the magnetiſm had therefore failed of their effect, ſince the criſis was tranquilized in the room of being augmented.

Some time after, while M. Majault examined the films ſhe had over her eyes, the magnetic baſon was preſented to the back of her head, and continued there for twelve minutes; ſhe was unconſcious of the operation and felt no effect from it; ſhe had even at no time been more tranquil, becauſe her imagination was diverted, and

fixed

fixed upon the examination that was making into the diſorder of her eyes.

The commiſſioners were informed that while this woman had been left alone in the anti-chamber, different perſons unacquainted with the animal magnetiſm had approached her, and the convulſive emotions had recommenced. She was deſired to obſerve that the magnetical operation was not performed upon her; but her imagination was ſtruck to ſuch a degree that ſhe replied: If you did nothing to me, I ſhould not be in the condition in which I am. She knew that ſhe had been ſent for in order to be made the ſubject of the experiments; and the approach of any perſon towards her, or the ſlighteſt noiſe attracted her attention, excited the idea of the magnetiſm and renewed her convulſions.

The imagination, in order to its acting with conſiderable ſtrength, has often need that you ſhould touch ſeveral cords at a time. It has a correſpondence with each of the ſenſes; and its reaction may be expected to be in proportion, both to the number of ſenſes applied to, and of ſenſations received: the commiſſioners were led to this obſervation by the following experiment. M. Jumelin had ſpoken to them of a young lady, twenty years of age, whom he had deprived of the faculty of ſpeech

ſpeech by the influence of the magnetiſm; the commiſſioners repeated the experiment at his houſe, the young lady conſented to ſubmit to it, and to ſuffer herſelf to be blindfolded.

The firſt object of the experiment was to endeavour to obtain the ſame effect without performing the operation; but, though in this ſituation ſhe felt or believed ſhe felt the effects of the magnetiſm, we were not able to ſtrike her imagination, with the force that was neceſſary for the ſucceſs of the experiment. The operation was then really performed, the bandage not being removed; and the ſucceſs was the ſame. The bandage was then taken away; her imagination was now attacked at once through the different channels of ſight and hearing, and the effects were more conſiderable; but though ſhe complained of a heavineſs in her head, an obſtruction in the ſuperior part of the noſtrils, and a number of the ſymptoms which ſhe had felt under the operation of M. Jumelin, ſhe did not loſe the faculty of ſpeech. She obſerved herſelf, that the hand by which ſhe was magnetiſed in the forehead, ought to deſcend to the level of the noſe, recollecting that that was its ſituation at the time in which ſhe had felt the loſs of her voice. What ſhe demanded was accordingly performed, and in three quarters of

a minute ſhe was dumb; nothing was now to be heard from her but low and inarticulate ſounds, though the exertion of the muſcles of the throat for the formation of ſound, and that of the tongue and the lips in order to articulation were viſible. This ſtate laſted only a minute: it is obvious to obſerve that, finding herſelf preciſely in the ſame circumſtances, the ſeduction of the underſtanding and the effect of that ſeduction upon the organs of ſpeech were the ſame. But it was not enough that ſhe ſhould be expreſsly informed that ſhe was magnetiſed, it was alſo neceſſary that the ſenſe of ſeeing ſhould yield her a teſtimony, ſtronger, and capable of greater effects; it was neceſſary that a geſture with which ſhe was already acquainted ſhould re-excite her former ideas. It ſhould ſeem that this experiment is admirably calculated to diſplay the manner in which the imagination acts, the degrees by which it is exalted, and the different exterior ſuccours it requires in order to its diſplaying itſelf in its greateſt energy.

The power, which the ſenſe of ſight exerciſes over the imagination, explains the effects attributed by the doctrine of the magnetiſm to the eyes. The eyes poſſeſs in an eminent degree the power of magnetiſing; ſigns and geſtures, as the com-

commiſſioners were informed, have commonly no effect, except upon a ſubject who has been previouſly maſtered by the employment of the eyes. The reaſon of this is very ſimple; it is the eyes that convey the moſt energetic expreſſions of paſſion, it is in them that is developed all that the human character has of the commanding or the attractive. It is natural therefore that the eyes ſhould be the ſource of a very high degree of power; but this power conſiſts merely in the aptitude they poſſeſs of moving the imagination, and that in a degree more or leſs ſtrong in proportion to the activity of the imagination. It is for this reaſon, that the whole proceſs of the magnetiſm commences from the eyes of the operator; and their influence is ſo powerful and leaves traces ſo ſtrong and lively, that a woman, newly arrived at the houſe of M. Deſlon, having encountered a look of one of his pupils, who had performed the operation upon her, juſt as ſhe was recovering from a criſis, had her eyes ſet in her head for three quarters of an hour. For a long time ſhe was haunted with the remembrance of this look; ſhe always ſaw before her this very eye fixed to regard her; and ſhe bore it uninterruptedly in her imagination ſleeping as well as waking for three days. We ſee from this inſtance what an imagination

is

is capable of doing, that can preſerve one impreſſion for ſo long a time, that is, can renew, of itſelf, and by its ſingle power, the ſame ſenſation regularly and without interruption, for three days.

The experiments, which we have already reported, are uniform in their nature, and contribute alike to the ſame deciſion; they authoriſe us to conclude that the imagination is the true cauſe of the effects attributed to the magnetiſm. But the partiſans of this new agent will perhaps reply, that the identity of effects does not always prove an identity of cauſes. They will grant that the imagination is capable of exciting theſe impreſſions without the magnetiſm; but they will maintain that the magnetiſm is alſo capable of exciting them without the imagination. The commiſſioners might eaſily deſtroy this aſſertion by applying the principles of all reaſoning, and the laws of natural philoſophy: of which the firſt, is to admit no new cauſes without an abſolute neceſſity. When the effects obſerved are capable of having been produced by a known cauſe, and a cauſe whoſe exiſtence other phenomena have already eſtabliſhed, ſound philoſophy teaches that the effects ought to be aſcribed to that cauſe; and when on the other hand we are acquainted with the diſcovery of a cauſe hitherto

hitherto unknown, ſound philoſophy requires that its exiſtence be made out by effects, which do not belong to a known cauſe, and which cannot be explained but by the new cauſe. It therefore properly belongs to the partiſans of the magnetiſm, to bring forward other proofs, and to diſcover effects which ſhall be entirely ſtripped of the illuſions of the imagination. But as facts are more demonſtrative than reaſonings, and as their evidence is more univerſally ſtriking, the commiſſioners have been deſirous of eſtabliſhing by experiment, what the magnetiſm could do in caſes where the imagination had no concern.

For this experiment they made choice of two rooms, contiguous to each other, and united by a door of communication. The door was taken away, and a frame of wood ſubſtituted in its place, with tranſverſe bars, and covered with a double texture of paper. In one of theſe rooms was a commiſſioner, who undertook to make minutes of the tranſaction, and a lady, who was given out to be juſt arrived from the country, and to have a ſuit of linen, which ſhe wanted to have made up. Mademoiſelle B——, a ſempſtreſs by profeſſion, who had been already employed in the experiments at Paſſy, and whoſe ſenſibility to the magnetiſm was well known,

known, was ſent for. Every thing was arranged againſt her arrival in ſuch a manner, that there was but one ſeat upon which ſhe could place herſelf, and that ſeat ſtood within the frame of the door of communication.

The commiſſioners were in the other apartment, and one of them, a phyſician, who had upon former occaſions performed the magnetical operation with ſucceſs, had undertaken to magnetiſe mademoiſelle B—— through the paper partition. It is a principle in the theory of the magnetiſm that this agent paſſes through doors, walls, &c. A partition of paper could therefore be no obſtacle; beſide M. Deſlon had poſitively declared that the magnetiſm paſſes through paper.

Mademoiſelle B—— was accordingly magnetiſed during half an hour, at the diſtance of a foot and an half, and in a direction oppoſite to that of the poles, in conformity to the rules taught by M. Deſlon, and which the commiſſioners had ſeen practiſed at his houſe. During the operation ſhe converſed with much gaiety, and, in anſwer to an enquiry concerning her health, ſhe readily replied, that ſhe was perfectly well: at Paſſy ſhe had fallen into a criſis in the courſe of three minutes; in the preſent inſtance ſhe underwent the operation of the magnetiſm without any

effect

effect for thirty minutes. The only reason of this difference must be that here she was ignorant of the operation, and that at Passy she thought it had been performed. The inevitable conclusion is, that the imagination singly produces all the effects attributed to the magnetism, and that, where the imagination ceases to be called forth, it has no longer the smallest efficacy.

Only one objection can be suggested to this experiment; it is that mademoiselle B—— might not be prepared to receive the magnetic fluid, and might be less susceptible to its operation than usual. The commissioners foresaw this objection, and for that reason made the following experiment. As soon as they had ceased to magnetise the patient through the paper partition, the same commissioner passed into the other apartment; he found no difficulty in engaging mademoiselle B—— to submit to the magnetical operation. It was accordingly repeated in precisely the same manner as in the former instance, at the distance of a foot and an half, and by the intervention of gestures only, together with the employment of the right finger and the rod of iron. If he had applied the hands, and touched the hypochonders, it might have been objected that any difference of effect, was to be ascribed to the application having been more immediate in

 the

the latter inſtance. But the only difference between the two experiments was, that in the former mademoiſelle B—— was magnetiſed in a direction oppoſite to that of the poles, and conformable to the rules of the magnetical theory; and in the ſecond ſhe was magnetiſed in the direction of the poles, or in the tranſverſe line. On this account according to the principles of the magnetiſm no effect ought to have been produced.

In three minutes however ſhe felt a ſenſation of dejection and ſuffocation; to theſe ſucceeded an interrupted hiccup, a chattering of the teeth, a contraction of the throat, and an extreme pain in her head; ſhe was reſtleſs in her chair; ſhe complained of a pain in the loins; now and then ſhe ſtruck her foot with extreme quickneſs on the floor; afterwards ſhe ſtretched her arms behind her, twiſting them extremely as at Paſſy; in a word the convulſive criſis was complete and accompanied with all the regular ſymptoms. All theſe accidents appeared in conſequence of a proceſs of twelve minutes, though the ſame proceſs employed for thirty minutes a little before had been ineffectual. The only ground of difference that remains, is the play that was afforded in the latter inſtance to the imagination; to this there-

therefore the difference of the effects is to be afcribed.

If the crifis originated in the influence of the imagination, it was the imagination alfo that put a ftop to it. The commiffioner who magnetifed her, obferved that it was time to have done; at the fame time prefenting to her his two forefingers in the form of a crofs; and it is proper to obferve that in fo doing he magnetifed her in the direction of the poles, in the fame manner as he had done through the whole experiment; no actual alteration had therefore been made, and the procefs being continued, the impreffions ought alfo to have continued. But the declared intention of the operator was fufficient to diffipate the crifis; her heat and the pain in her head were immediately alleviated. The diforder of her frame was in this manner followed from place to place, announcing at the fame time that it was going to difappear. In this manner in obedience to the voice to which the imagination was fubjected, the contraction of the throat ceafed, then the accidents of the breaft, laftly thofe of the ftomach and the arms. The whole required only three minutes; after which mademoifelle B—— declared that fhe no longer felt any fenfation, but was perfectly reftored to her habitual ftate.

Theſe laſt experiments, as well as ſeveral of thoſe that were made at the houſe of M. Jumelin, have the double advantage of demonſtrating at once the efficacy of the imagination, and the impotence of the magnetiſm, in regard of the ſymptoms which were operated.

If the ſymptoms are more conſiderable and the criſes more violent at the public proceſs, it is becauſe various cauſes are combined with the imagination, to operate, to multiply and to enlarge its effects. They begin with ſubduing the minds of the patients by the employment of the eyes; this is followed by the touch, the application of the hands; it is proper to develop in this place the phyſical effects of this method of procedure.

The ſymptoms are more or leſs conſiderable: the leſs are hiccuphings, qualms of the ſtomach and purgings; the greater are the convulſions to which they have given the denomination of criſes. The parts upon which the touch is employed, are the hypochonders, the pit of the ſtomach, and ſometimes the ovaria, when the patient is a woman. The hands and the fingers are preſſed with a greater or leſs ſtreſs upon theſe different regions.

The colon, one of the larger inteſtines, runs through both the regions of the hypochonders, and the region of the epi-

gaſtrium

gaſtrium which ſeparates them. It is placed immediately under the integuments. It is therefore upon this inteſtine that the preſſure falls, an inteſtine full of ſenſibility and irritability. A repeated voluntary effort, without aſſiſtance from any other cauſe, excites the muſcular action of this inteſtine, and ſometimes procures evacuations. Nature, as it were by inſtinct, indicates this manœuvre to perſons hypochondriacally affected. The proceſs of the magnetiſm is nothing more than this very manœuvre; and the evacuations it is calculated to produce are further facilitated in the magnetical proceſs, by the frequent and almoſt habitual uſe of a real laxative, the cream of tartar in their drink.

But while the motion which is produced, excites principally the irritability of the colon, this inteſtine offers other phenomena. It ſwells in a greater or leſs degree, and ſometimes diſtends itſelf to a conſiderable volume. At ſuch times it communicates to the diaphragm ſuch an irritation, that this organ becomes more or leſs convulſed. It is this convulſion to which they have given the appellation of criſis in the animal magnetiſm. One of the commiſſioners had occaſion to ſee a woman, ſubject to a kind of ſpaſmodic vomitings, with which ſhe was ſeized ſeveral times in the courſe of every day. Her

efforts produced nothing but a turbid and viſcous water, ſimilar to that which is brought up by the patients in the criſis of the magnetical operation. The convulſion had its ſeat in the diaphragm, and the region of the colon was ſo ſenſible, that the ſlighteſt touch upon that part, a ſtrong commotion of the air, the ſurpriſe cauſed by a ſudden noiſe ſufficed to excite the convulſion. This woman had therefore regular criſes without the aſſiſtance of the magnetiſm, by the ſingle irritability of the colon and diaphragm; and the women who are magnetiſed, obtain their criſes from the ſame cauſe and through the ſame irritability.

The application of the hands upon the ſtomach has phyſical effects not leſs remarkable. The application is made directly upon that organ. Sometimes a ſtrong continuous compreſſion is operated, ſometimes a number of ſlight and ſucceſſive compreſſions, ſometimes a diſcompoſure of the ſtomach by a rotatory motion of the rod of iron in contact with the part, or by the ſucceſſive and rapid paſſage of the thumbs over it one after the other. Theſe methods convey almoſt immediately to the ſtomach an irritation, more or leſs ſtrong and durable, in proportion as the ſubject is more or leſs ſuſceptible. The part is alſo previouſly diſpoſed for the reception

ception of this irritation by being firſt compreſſed. This compreſſion prepares it to act upon the diaphragm and to communicate to it the impreſſions it receives. It is irritated, the diaphragm is alſo irritated, and from thence reſult, in the ſame manner as by the action of the colon, the nervous accidents which had been already ſtated. In women who are peculiarly ſuſceptible, the mere compreſſion of the two hypochonders, without their being acted upon in any other manner, occaſions a contraction of the ſtomach and fits of ſwooning. This happened in the caſe of the woman magnetiſed by M. Jumelin, and it often happens from no other cauſe than an improper degree of tightneſs in their dreſs. Theſe caſes are not followed by the criſis, becauſe the ſtomach is compreſſed, without being irritated, and the diaphragm remains in its natural ſtate. The ſame methods employed upon the ovaria in the female ſex, beſide their particular effects, produce with great force the above accidents. The empire and extenſive influence of the uterus over the animal œconomy is well known.

The intimate connection of the colon, the ſtomach and the uterus with the diaphragm is one of the cauſes of the effects aſcribed to the magnetiſm. The regions of the lower belly, which are the ſubject

of theſe operations, anſwer to the different plexuſes which conſtitute a regular nervous centre in this part, by means of which, leaving every particular ſyſtem out of the queſtion, there moſt certainly exiſts a ſympathy, communication or correſpondence between all the parts of the body, ſuch an action and reaction, that the ſenſations excited in this centre affect the other parts of the body, and reciprocally a ſenſation experienced in any part affects and calls into play the nervous centre, which often tranſmits the impreſſion back again to all the parts of the body.

The truth thus ſtated not only explains the effects of the magnetic touch, but alſo the phyſical effects of the imagination. It has been conſtantly remarked, that the affections of the ſoul make their firſt corporeal impreſſion upon the nervous centre, which commonly leads their ſubject to deſcribe himſelf as having a weight upon his ſtomach, or a ſenſation of ſuffocation. The diaphragm enters into this buſineſs, from whence originate the ſighs, the tears and the expreſſions of mirth. The viſcera of the lower belly then experience a reaction; and it is by this automatous proceſs that we are enabled to account for the phyſical diſorders produced by the imagination. Surpriſe occaſions the colic, terror cauſes a diarrhœa, melancholy is the origin of

of icterical distempers. The history of medicine presents to us an infinity of examples of the power of imagination and the mental affections. The terror occasioned by a fire, a violent degree of desire, a strong and undoubting hope, a fit of choler have restored the use of his limbs to one who has been crippled with the gout or to a paralytic person; a strong and unlooked for degree of joy has dissipated a quartan ague of two months standing; close attention is a remedy for the hiccup; and persons, who by some accident have been deprived of the faculty of speech, have recovered it in consequence of some of the vehement emotions of the soul. This last assertion is supported by the testimony of history, and the commissioners have themselves witnessed a suspension of this faculty, occasioned singly by the imagination. The action and reaction of the physical upon the moral system, and of the moral upon the physical, have been acknowledged ever since the phenomena of the medical science have been remarked, that is, ever since the origin of the science.

Tears, laughter, coughs, hiccups, and in general all the effects which are observed in what have been stiled crises in the animal magnetism, do therefore originate either in the interruption of the functions of the diaphragm by a physical vehicle, such

ſuch as the touch and the preſſure, or from the power with which the imagination is endowed of acting upon this organ and interrupting its functions.

If it be objected that the touch is not always neceſſary to theſe effects, it may be replied, that the imagination may be ſufficiently fertile in reſources to produce them all by its ſole inſtrumentality; eſpecially the imagination exerted in a public proceſs, called into play at once by the methods in which it is itſelf addreſſed, and by the effects obſerved in thoſe who ſurround it. It has been already ſeen what were its effects in the experiments made by the commiſſioners upon iſolated ſubjects; it may eaſily be conceived in what degree thoſe effects muſt be multiplied in the caſe of a number of patients collected together in a public proceſs. Theſe patients are aſſembled in a narrow ſpace, if the ſpace be compared with the number of patients; the air of the apartment is heated, although care be employed to renew it; and it is always more or leſs impregnated with mephitic gas, which has the property of acting immediately upon the head and the nervous ſyſtem. When the introduction of muſic is added, it affords another means of acting upon and exciting the nerves.

In the public procefs feveral women are magnetifed at the fame time, and they experience at firft no effects but fuch as are fimilar to thofe, obtained by the commiffioners in various experiments. It is even acknowledged that for the moft part the crifes do not commence in lefs than the fpace of two hours. By little and little the impreffions are communicated from one to another, and reinforced, in the fame manner as the impreffions which are made by theatrical reprefentation, where the impreffions are greater in proportion to the number of the fpectators, and the liberty they enjoy of expreffing their fenfations. The applaufe, by which the emotions of individuals are announced, occafions a general emotion, which every one partakes in the degree in which he is fufceptible. The fame obfervation has been made in armies upon a day of battle, where the enthufiafm of courage, as well as the impreffions of terror, are propagated with fo amazing rapidity. The drum, the found of the military mufical inftruments, the noife of the cannon, the mufquetry, the fhouts of the army, and the general diforder imprefs the organs, have a uniform effect upon the underftanding, and exalt the imagination in the fame degree. In this equilibrium of inebriation, the external manifeftation of a fingle fenfation imme-

diately

diately becomes univerſal; it hurries the ſoldiery to the charge, or it determines them to fly. The ſame cauſe is deeply concerned in rebellions; the multitude are governed by the imagination; the individuals in a numerous aſſembly are more ſubjected to their ſenſes, and leſs capable of ſubmitting to the dictates of reaſon; and where fanaticiſm is the preſiding quality, its fruit is the tremblers of the Cevennes*. It has been uſual to forbid numerous

* Marſhal Villars, who was employed in appeaſing the troubles of the Cevennes, ſays: "I ſaw things in "this kind, which I ſhould not have believed, if they "had not paſſed before my eyes; I ſaw a conſiderable "town, of which the whole female part without ex"ception appeared to be poſſeſſed by the devil. They "trembled and propheſied publicly in the ſtreets. One "had the raſhneſs to tremble and propheſy for an hour "together in my preſence. But of all theſe abſurdities "the moſt ſurpriſing was that, which was related to me "by the biſhop of Alais, and which I wrote to M. de "Chamillard in the following terms.

"'A M. de Mandagors, lord of the manor of that "name, mayor of Alais, poſſeſſing the firſt appoint"ments in the town and county, and having even been "for ſome time ſubdelegate to M. de Bâville, was the "ſubject of this relation. He was ſixty years of age, "temperate in his manners, poſſeſſed of a fine under"ſtanding, and had written and publiſhed many per"formances. Some of them I have read, and, before "I knew what I have juſt learned reſpecting him, I "conſidered them as diſtinguiſhed by a very vigorous "imagination.

"'A propheteſs, aged twenty ſeven or twenty eight "years, was taken up about eighteen months ago and "carried

numerous aſſemblies in ſeditious towns, as a means of ſtopping a contagion ſo eaſily

" carried before the biſhop of Alais. He interrogated " her before ſeveral eccleſiaſtics. The creature, after " having heard what he ſaid, replied with a modeſt air, " exhorted him no longer to torment the true children " of God, and then addreſſed him for an entire hour " in an uncouth language of which he could not under- " ſtand a word: juſt as we have formerly ſeen the duke " de la Ferté, when he had drank a few glaſſes, talk " Engliſh before the inhabitants of that country. I " have heard them ſay, I underſtand very well that he " ſpeaks Engliſh, but I cannot comprehend a word " that he ſays. It would have been ſomewhat difficult " that they ſhould have done ſo, for he never knew a " word of Engliſh in his life. This girl talked Greek " and Hebrew in the ſtyle of the duke de la Ferté.

" ' You will take it for granted that M. d'Alais " ſent the girl to priſon. After ſeveral months, the " girl appearing to be entirely ridded of her abſurdities " by the attention and advice of the ſieur de Mandagors, " who frequently viſited her in her confinement, ſhe " was ſet at liberty, and the conſequence of that liberty, " and of the liberties that the ſieur Mandagors had " taken with her, was an immediate pregnancy.

" ' But the fact which I was about to relate is the " reſignation made by the ſieur Mandagors of all " his employments in favour of his ſon, at the ſame " time ſaying to ſeveral individuals, and among others " to the biſhop, that it was by expreſs commiſſion from " God that he had had carnal knowledge of the pro- " pheteſs, and that the child which ſhould be born " would be the true ſaviour of the world. The con- " ſequence of all this in any other country than France, " would have been merely the ſending M. the mayor " and his fair patroneſs to bedlam. The biſhop " ſuggeſted to me to have him arreſted. I propoſed " previouſly to confer with M. de Bàville, intendant of " the province, ordering in the mean time that he and

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eaſily communicated. Every where example acts upon the moral part of our frame, mechanical imitation upon the phyſical part: the minds of individuals are calmed by diſperſing them; the ſame method puts a ſtop to their ſpaſmodic affections, always contagious in their nature: we have had a recent example of this in the young ladies of Saint Roch, who were in this manner cured of the

" the propheteſs ſhould be cloſely watched, ſo that they " might not be able to eſcape. My opinion was, that, " in the midſt of a country of madmen, what relates to " a madman of ſuch importance ought to make as little " noiſe as poſſible; and that it was therefore neceſſary " to endeavour to get him out of the country by gentle " means, and then to take him into cuſtody. Your " lordſhip will eaſily conceive that to declare publicly " for a prophet a mayor of Alais, the lord of an exten- " ſive manor, an ancient ſubdelegate of the intendant, " an author, and a man hitherto eſteemed for his pene- " tration and ſagacity, in the midſt of a country ac- " cuſtomed to venerate and reſpect him, was a meaſure " better calculated to revolt the minds of the inhabi- " tants than to correct them. It would the rather " have had this tendency, that, except the folly of be- " lieving that God had commanded him to have carnal " knowledge of this young woman, his converſation is " as full of reaſon and good ſenſe, as was that of Don " Quixote upon all other ſubjects but that of knight- " errantry. M. de Bâville was of my opinion. The " children of M. Mandagors conducted him without " noiſe to one of his châteaux, where he was con- " fined, and the propheteſs taken from him and ſent " to priſon.' " Vie du Maréchal Duc de Villars, tome I. pages 325 and following.

convulſions

convulsions with which they were affected when together*.

The magnetism then, or rather the operations of the imagination, are equally discoverable at the theatre, in the camp, and in all numerous assemblies, as at the bucket, acting indeed by different means, but producing similar effects. The bucket is surrounded with a crowd of patients; the sensations are continually communicated and recommunicated; it

* On the day of the ceremony of the first communion, celebrated in the parish church of Saint Roch a few years ago (1780), after the evening service they made according to custom the procession through the streets. Scarcely were the children returned to the church, and had resumed their seats, before a young girl fell ill and had convulsions. This affection propagated itself with so much rapidity, that in the space of half an hour fifty or sixty girls from twelve to nineteen years of age were seized with the same convulsions; that is, with a contraction of the throat, an inflation of the stomach, suffocation, hiccups and spasms more or less considerable. These accidents reappeared in some instances in the course of the week; but the following Sunday, being assembled with the dames of Sainte Anne, whose business it is to teach the young ladies, twelve of them were seized with the same convulsions, and more would have followed, if they had not had the precaution to send away each child upon the spot to her relations. The whole were obliged to be divided into several schools. By thus separating the children, and not keeping them together but in small numbers, three weeks sufficed to dissipate entirely this epidemical convulsive affection. See for other instances of the same kind the Natural History of Convulsions by M. Hecquet.

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ought to be expected that the nerves ſhould be at length worn out with this exerciſe, they are accordingly irritated, and the woman of moſt ſenſibility in the company gives the ſignal. Immediately the cords, every where ſtretched to the ſame degree and in perfect uniſon, reſpond to each other; the criſes are multiplied; they mutually reinforce each other, and are rendered violent. In the mean time the men, who are witneſſes of theſe emotions, partake of them in proportion to their nervous ſenſibility; and thoſe with whom this ſenſibility is greateſt and moſt eaſily excited become themſelves the ſubjects of a criſis.

This propenſity to irritation, partly natural and partly acquired, becomes in each ſex habitual. The ſenſations having been felt once or oftener, nothing is now neceſſary, but to recal the memory of them, and to exalt the imagination to the ſame degree, in order to operate the ſame effects. This will never be difficult when the ſubject is placed in the ſame circumſtances. The public proceſs is no longer neceſſary, you have only to touch the hypochonders and to conduct the finger and the rod of iron before the countenance; the ſigns are well known. Even theſe are not neceſſary, it is ſufficient that the patients be blindfolded, made to believe that theſe ſigns are repeated

repeated upon them, and that they are magnetiſed; the ideas are reexcited, the ſenſations are reproduced, the imagination, employing its accuſtomed inſtruments and reſuming its former routes, gives birth to the ſame phenomena. Theſe caſes happen exactly to the patients of M. Deſlon, who fall into a criſis without the bucket, and without being excited with the ſpectacle of the public proceſs.

Compreſſion, imagination, imitation are therefore the true cauſes of the effects attributed to this new agent, known by the appellation of animal magnetiſm, this fluid, which is ſaid to circulate through the human body, and to be communicated from individual to individual. Such is the reſult of the experiments of the commiſſioners, and the obſervations they made upon the means employed and the effects produced. This agent, this fluid has no exiſtence. Chimerical however as it is, the idea is by no means novel. Some authors, particularly phyſicians of the laſt age, have expreſsly treated of it in various performances. The curious and intereſting enquiries of M. Thouret have convinced the public, that the theory, the operations and the effects of the animal magnetiſm, propoſed in the laſt age, were nearly the ſame with thoſe revived in the preſent. The magnetiſm then is no more than an old

falſhood. The theory indeed is now preſented, as was neceſſary in a more enlightened age, with a greater degree of pomp; but it is not leſs erroneous. Human nature is formed to ſeize, to quit and to reſume the miſtake which is flattering to its wiſhes. There are errors which will be eternally dear to the ſublunary ſtate. How often has the pretended ſcience of aſtrology vaniſhed and reappeared! The magnetiſm is calculated to lead us back to it. Its profeſſors have been deſirous of connecting it with the celeſtial influences, that it might have the ſtronger ſeduction, and attract mankind by the two hopes that are neareſt their heart, that of looking into futurity, and that of prolonging their exiſtence.

There is room to believe that the imagination is the principal of the three cauſes which we have aſſigned to the magnetiſm. It appears by the experiments we have related that it ſuffices alone to produce the criſes. The preſſure and the touch ſeem to ſerve it as preparatives; it is by the touch that the nerves begin to be excited, imitation communicates and extends the impreſſions. But the imagination is that active and terrible power, by which are operated the aſtoniſhing effects, that have excited ſo much attention to the public proceſs. The effects ſtrike all the world,

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the cauſe is enveloped in the ſhades of obſcurity. When we conſider that theſe effects ſeduced in former ages men, venerable for their merit, their illumination and even their genius, Paracelſus, Van Helmont and Kircher, we ceaſe to be aſtoniſhed, that perſons of the preſent day, learned and well informed, that even a great number of phyſicians have been the dupes of this ſyſtem. Had the commiſſioners been admitted only to the public proceſs, where there is neither time nor opportunity of making deciſive experiments, they might themſelves have been led into error. It was neceſſary to have liberty to inſulate the effects, in order to diſtinguiſh the cauſes; it was neceſſary to ſee as they have done the imagination act, if we may be allowed the expreſſion, partially, and produce its effects one by one and in detail, to have an idea to what the accumulation of thoſe effects might amount; to conceive the extent of its power, and to account for all its prodigies. Such an examination demanded a ſacrifice of time, and a number of ſyſtematical reſearches, which we have not always the leiſure to undertake for our private inſtruction or private curioſity, nor even the power properly to purſue without being like the commiſſioners charged with the mandates

of the ſovereign, and honoured with the confidence of the public.

M. Deſlon is not much averſe to the admiſſion of theſe principles. He declared in our ſeſſion held at the houſe of Dr. Franklin the 19th of June, that he thought he might lay it down as a fact, that the imagination had the greateſt ſhare in the effects of the animal magnetiſm; he ſaid that this new agent might be no other than the imagination itſelf, whoſe power is as extenſive as it is little known: he affirmed that he always acknowledged the concern of this faculty in the treatment of his patients, and he affirmed with equal confidence that many perſons have been either entirely cured or infinitely amended in the ſtate of their health under his direction. He remarked to the commiſſioners that the imagination thus directed to the relief of ſuffering humanity, would be a moſt valuable means in the hands of the medical profeſſion*; and perſuaded of the

* M. Deſlon had already ſaid in 1780. "Granting "for a moment that M. Meſmer poſſeſſes no other "ſecret than that of employing the imagination in the "extenſive production of the moſt ſalutary effects, will "it not ſtill be true, that his invention is an extremely "valuable one? For in reality, if the phyſic of the "imagination be more ſalutary than the other kinds "of medicine, what good reaſon can be alledged, why "the phyſic of the imagination ſhould not be brought "into general uſe?" Obſervations on the Animal Magnetiſm, pages 46 and 47.

reality

reality of the power of the imagination, he invited the commiſſioners to embrace the opportunity which his practice afforded to ſtudy its procedure and its effects. If therefore M. Deſlon be ſtill attached to his firſt idea, that theſe effects are to be aſcribed to the agency of a fluid, which is communicated from individual to individual by the touch or under the guidance of a conductor, he cannot however avoid conceding to the commiſſioners that only one cauſe is requiſite to one effect, and that ſince the imagination is a ſufficient cauſe, the ſuppoſition of the magnetic fluid is uſeleſs. It cannot be denied that we are ſurrounded with a fluid which peculiarly belongs to us; the inſenſible perſpiration forms around us an atmoſphere of inſenſible vapours: but this fluid has no agency but ſuch as is common to other atmoſpheres; cannot be communicated by the touch but in infinitely ſmall quantities; is not capable of being directed either by conductors, or by the eyes, or by the will; is neither propagated by ſound, nor reflected by mirrors; and is in no caſe ſuſceptible of the effects aſcribed to it.

It remains for us to enquire, whether the criſes or convulſions, excited by the methods of the pretended magnetiſm in the aſſemblies round the bucket, be capable

of

of any utility, or be calculated to cure or relieve the patients. The imagination of ſick perſons has unqueſtionably a very frequent and conſiderable ſhare in the cure of their diſeaſes. With the effect of it we are unacquainted otherwiſe than by general experience; but, though it has not been traced in poſitive experiments, it ſhould ſeem not to admit of a reaſonable doubt. It is a known adage, that in phyſic as well as religion, men are ſaved by faith; this faith is the produce of the imagination: in theſe caſes the imagination acts by gentle means; it is by diffuſing tranquility over the ſenſes, by reſtoring the harmony of the functions, by recalling into play every principle of the frame under the genial influence of hope. Hope is an eſſential conſtituent of human life; the man that yields us one contributes to reſtore to us the other. But when the imagination produces convulſions, the means it employs are violent; and ſuch means are almoſt always deſtructive. There are indeed a few rare caſes in which they may be uſeful; there are deſperate diſeaſes, in which it is neceſſary to overturn every thing for the introduction of an order totally new. Theſe critical ſhocks are to be employed in the medical art in the ſame manner as poiſons. It is requiſite that neceſſity ſhould demand, and œconomy employ

employ them. The need of them is momentary; the ſhock ought to be ſingle. Very far from repeating it, the intelligent phyſician exerts himſelf to invent the means of repairing the indiſpenſible evil which has thus been produced; but in the public proceſs of the magnetiſm the criſes are repeated every day, they are long and violent. Now ſince the ſtate introduced by theſe criſes is pernicious, the habit cannot be other than fatal. How indeed can it be conceived, that a woman, attacked for inſtance with a pulmonary diſtemper, can undergo with impunity a criſis, ſome of whoſe ſymptoms are a convulſive cough and compulſory expectorations; or can ſafely fatigue, perhaps ſhatter the lungs by violent and repeated efforts, when ſo great pains are neceſſary to convey to the wounded frame the ſanative and the balſamic? How can we imagine that a man, be his diſorder what it will, can need in order to his recovery the intervention of criſes, in which the ſight appears to be loſt, the members ſtiffen, he ſtrikes his breaſt with precipitate and involuntary motions; criſes in a word, that are terminated by an abundant ſpitting of viſcous humours and even blood? The blood thus diſcharged is neither vitiated nor corrupted, it flows from veſſels from which it is torn by the violence of effort and contrary to the intention of nature;

nature; these effects are therefore to be regarded as a real not a salutary evil, an evil additional to the distemper be it what it will.

Nor is this the only danger with which they are attended. Man is incessantly enslaved by custom; nature is modified by habit only in a progressive manner, yet she is often so completely modified, as to suffer an entire metamorphosis, and to be scarcely capable of being known for the same. Who will assure us that this state of crises, at first voluntarily induced, shall not become habitual? And should the habit thus contracted frequently reproduce the same symptoms, in spite of the will, and almost without the assistance of the imagination, how dreadful the fate of an individual, subjected to so violent effects, tormented, as well morally as physically, with their unfortunate impression, whose days should be divided between apprehension and agony, and whose life should be an uninterrupted state of suffering! Nervous distempers of this description, even when natural, are the opprobrium of the medical science; how little ought it to be the object of art to produce them! The art, which thus interferes with all the functions of the animal œconomy, urges nature out of her proper course, and multiplies the victims of irregularity, is to be regarded as pernicious.

cious. Its effects are the more to be apprehended, since it not only aggravates the disorder of the nerves by renewing their symptoms, and causing them to degenerate into habit; but if a distemper of this kind be contagious, as it may be suspected to be, the method of provoking nervous convulsions and of exciting them in public assemblies is a means to diffuse them in great towns, and even to afflict with them generations to come, since the diseases and the habits of parents are transmitted to their posterity.

The commissioners having convinced themselves, that the animal magnetic fluid is capable of being perceived by none of our senses, and had no action either upon themselves or upon the subjects of their several experiments; being assured, that the touches and compressions employed in its application rarely occasioned favourable changes in the animal œconomy, and that the impressions thus made are always hurtful to the imagination; in fine having demonstrated by decisive experiments, that the imagination without the magnetism produces convulsions, and that the magnetism without the imagination produces nothing; they have concluded with an unanimous voice respecting the existence and the utility of the magnetism, that the existence of the fluid is absolutely destitute

of proof, that the fluid having no existence can consequently have no use, that the violent symptoms observed in the public process are to be ascribed to the compression, to the imagination called into action, and to that propensity to mechanical imitation, which leads us in spite of ourselves to the repetition of what strikes our senses. And at the same time they think themselves obliged to add as an important observation, that the compressions and the repeated action of the imagination employed in producing the crises may be hurtful, that the sight of these crises is not less dangerous on account of that imitation which nature seems to have imposed upon us as a law, and that of consequence every public process, in which the means of the animal magnetism shall be employed, cannot fail in the end of producing the most pernicious effects *.

Paris,

* If it be objected to the commissioners that this decision concludes respecting the magnetism in general, instead of relating singly to the magnetism practised by M. Deslon, the commissioners reply that the intention of the king was to have their opinion upon the animal magnetism, and that in consequence they have not exceeded the bounds of their commission. Again they reply that M. Deslon has appeared to them acquainted with what are called the principles of the magnetism, and that he certainly possesses the means of producing the effects and exciting the crises which are ascribed to it.

The

Paris, the 11th day of Auguſt, 1784.

(Signed) B. Franklin,
Majault,
Le Roy,
Sallin,
Bailly,
D'Arcet,
De Bory,
Guillotin,
Lavoisier.

The principles of M. Deſlon are the very ſame with thoſe included in the twenty ſeven propoſitions diſſeminated from the preſs by M. Meſmer in 1779. If M. Meſmer now announces a more extenſive theory, it was not neceſſary for the commiſſioners to be acquainted with the theory to decide upon the exiſtence and utility of the magnetiſm, it was ſufficient to eſtimate the effects. It is by the effects that the exiſtence of a cauſe is eſtabliſhed, it is by the effects alſo that its utility muſt be demonſtrated. The phenomena are learned from obſervation long before we can arrive at the theory which connects and explains them. The theory of the loadſtone does not yet exiſt, and its phenomena are aſcertained by the experience of ſucceſſive ages. The theory of M. Meſmer is in this caſe indifferent and ſuperfluous; the methods employed, the effects produced, this is what it was neceſſary to examine. Now it is eaſy to prove that the eſſential practice of the magnetiſm is known to M. Deſlon.

M. Deſlon was for many years the pupil of M. Meſmer. Conſtantly during that time he ſaw the proceſs of the animal magnetiſm, and the means employed in exciting and directing it. M. Deſlon himſelf adminiſtered the magnetiſm in the preſence of M. Meſmer; ſeparated from him he operated the ſame effects. Being afterwards reconciled they united their patients; the one

one and the other without diftinction undertook the management of them, and of confequence the methods were the fame. The method which is followed at this day by M. Deflon can be no other than the method of M. Mefmer.

The effects are not lefs correfpondent. There are crifes equally frequent, and accompanied by fimilar fymptoms, at the houfe of M. Deflon and at the houfe of M. Mefmer; the effects do not therefore belong to the method of an individual, but to the practice of the magnetifm in general. The experiments of the commiffioners demonftrate that the effects obtained by M. Deflon are due to compreffion, to imagination and to imitation. Thefe are therefore the caufes of the magnetifm in general. The obfervations of the commiffioners have convinced them that thefe convulfive crifes and thefe violent means cannot be ufeful in medicine any otherwife than as poifons, and they have judged independent of all theory that wherever it fhall be the object to excite convulfions they may become habitual and pernicious, they may be epidemically diffufed, and even extend to future generations.

The commiffioners were of confequence obliged to conclude that not only the meafures in a particular mode of proceeding, but the meafures of the magnetifm in general, might in the end produce the moft pernicious effects.

F I N I S.

